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THEOLOGICAL WORKS,

PUBLISHED AT DIFFERENT TIMES,

AND NOW COLLECTED INTO VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

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BY THOMAS SCOTT,

RECTOR OF ASTON SANDFORD, BUCKS.

VOL. V.

ESSAYS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN RELIGION.

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED FOR WILLIAM W. WOODWARD, CORNER OF SECOND AND CHESNUT STREETS.

1810.

THE NEW YORK
815919
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
1916 L
815919

CONTENTS

OF

THE FIFTH VOLUME.

ESSAYS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECTS IN RELIGION.

ESSAY I.

PAGE

On the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures - 5

ESSAY II.

On the importance of revealed truth; the duty of reading the Scriptures; and the manner in which they should be read - - - - - - 27

ESSAY III.

On the Scriptural Character of God - - - 46

ESSAY IV.

A brief exposition of the Ten Commandments, as comprising the substance of the Moral Law - - - 64

ESSAY V.

On Man's situation, as a Sinner, in the present world 94

ESSAY VI.

On the Deity of Jesus Christ - - - - 111

ESSAY VII.

The Doctrine of Christ's Deity shewn to be essential to Christianity: and some objections to the doctrine briefly answered - - - - - 136

ESSAY VIII.

On the nature and design of the Mediatorial Office, sustained by the Lord Jesus Christ - - - 158

ESSAY IX.

On the Merits and Atonement of Christ - - 175

ESSAY X.

On the Exaltation of Christ, and his Appearance in the presence of God in our behalf - - - - 196

ESSAY XI.

On Justification - - - - - 215

ESSAY XII.

On Regeneration - - - - - - - 238

ESSAY XIII.

On the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit; with some thoughts on the Doctrine of the sacred Trinity 256

ESSAY XIV.

On the Gifts and Influences of the Holy Spirit - 277

ESSAY XV.

On the uses of the Moral Law, in Subserviency to the Gospel of Christ - - - - - 297

ESSAY XVI.

On the Believer's Warfare and Experience - - 316

ESSAY XVII.

On the Privileges enjoyed by the True Believer - 334

ESSAY XVIII.

On the disposition and character, peculiar to the true Believer - - - - - - 353

ESSAY XIX.

The Subject continued - - - - 370

ESSAY XX.

On the Believer's Attention to relative Duties - 394

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AND NOW COLLECTED INTO VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

accurate; and further proof, from the sacred oracles, has frequently been adduced, in support of the conclusions which had been formed: a correct and copious Index, for the conveniency of the reader, has also been annexed.

The work, thus revised, the author commends to the candour of the publick, from which it has already met with a favourable reception: and he earnestly begs the prayers of all pious Christians, for the divine blessing on this attempt; and on all his other feeble endeavours to spread the knowledge of the blessed gospel of God our Saviour, and to excite and direct believers to adorn that holy doctrine by their whole conduct and conversation.

ESSAY I.

On the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

IT is manifest to all who seriously reflect on the powers and propensities of human nature, that we are formed capable of religion, and have an inward consciousness that we ought to worship some superior Being, on whom our safety and happiness depend: but at the same time, the state of the world, in all places where the Bible has not been known, unanswerably proves, that we are incapable of discovering for ourselves, a religion which is worthy of God, suited to our wants, and conducive to our true interest. The shortness of life also, and the reasonable persuasion that men in general entertain of a future state, concur to show that our grand concern lies in another world. Yet uncertainty and perplexity, nay, palpable error and absurdity, have ever encumbered men's reasonings and conjectures on these important subjects. Even at Athens, JEHOVAH was "the unknown God,"* and all beyond the grave was an unknown world.

---

* *Acts xvii. 23.*

The wisest of the Pagans, therefore, considered a revelation from the Deity as exceedingly desirable in order that bewildered mortals might learn the way, in which they could worship him with acceptance and be happy; and some of them entertained hopes, that such an inestimable favour would at length be vouchsafed. Indeed confused expectations of this kind have been common in the world; as is manifest from the reception that hath been given to pretended revelations, which otherwise could not have obtained credit and currency.

Various impositions, in this important concern, have been detected by careful investigation: and there is *but one book in the world*, in behalf of which, as a *divine revelation*, any thing even *plausible* can be advanced. This has stood the test of ages and undergone the most severe scrutiny; and the more carefully serious enquirers have examined it, the fuller conviction have they obtained of its divine authority. No one now ventures forth as an avowed, sober, and manly adversary, to dispute its claim in the open field of fair argument: yet few in comparison are *practically* convinced, that it is the unerring word of God; and an increasing number of *objectors* perplex themselves and others, by discovering supposed inconsistencies and unimportant difficulties; or by setting up their own reasonings and imaginations in opposition to its doctrines, and making that disagreement a ground of hesitation or rejection. So that scepticism, and a partial, frivolous, disingenuous, carping infidelity have become exceedingly common; the minds of young persons especially

are thus poisoned; great pains are taken to disseminate these cavils and objections, (though they have been solidly answered again and again;) and those persons are treated as weak enthusiasts, or irrational bigots, who simply believe the Scriptures as the sure testimony of God.

It may, therefore, be seasonable to state, with all possible brevity, some of the most conclusive reasons, by which reflecting men have been induced to submit to the authority of the Bible, and to believe that it is a revelation from the God of truth. By the *divine Inspiration* of the holy Scriptures, I mean, 'Such an immediate and complete discovery, by the Holy Spirit 'to the minds of the sacred writers, of those things 'which could not have been otherwise known; and 'such an effectual superintendency, as to those matters which they might be informed of by other means, 'as entirely preserved them from error, in every particular, which could in the least affect any of the doctrines or precepts contained in their books.' Every proposition, therefore, is to be considered as the sure testimony of God, in that sense according to which it is proposed as truth. Those facts occurred, and those words were spoken, as to the import of them, and the instruction to be deduced from them, which there stand recorded; but we must judge concerning the *morality of men's actions*, and the *truth of their sentiments*, by the preceptive and doctrinal parts of the Scriptures. Nor does it at all invalidate the complete inspiration of the sacred writers, to allow that they expressed themselves in *common language*, and wrote of

things as men generally spoke of them, rather than according to philosophical exactness, or in the style that was used in the schools of the learned during the ages in which they lived. Supposed or unimportant errors, or inaccuracies of expression, in such things, are not in the least inconsistent with that entire divine inspiration of which we speak; for the Scriptures were not written to render us exact philosophers, or to instruct us in ancient history and geography, but to "make us wise unto salvation." Nor do the few immaterial mistakes, which in a long course of years have crept in, through the errors of transcribers, create any difficulty or uncertainty to the humble and teachable enquirer: though they frequently give occasion to the self-sufficient to cavil and object; for the "Lord taketh the wise, in their own craftiness."

And let it be well considered, that it is perfectly futile and absurd for any man to dispute against the reasonableness of the doctrines, the credibility of the facts, or the justice of the divine dispensations, as stated in the Bible; while he finds himself unable to answer the plain arguments, which are adduced to prove the whole to be the word of God. Where the premises are undeniable, and the deductions unavoidable, obstinacy and self-conceit alone will persist in incredulity; and ridicule, reviling, subtle insinuations, or witty sarcasms, are, in such a case, certain indications of a proud and bitter enmity to the truth itself. If then the arguments, that shall be adduced, be sufficient to establish the divine authority of the Scriptures, I *trust the* reader will recollect, that, as a reasonable and

accountable creature, he is bound to study, believe, and obey them; and to make them the rule and standard of all his principles, affections, and conduct. These things being premised, I observe—

I. That vast numbers of wise and good men, through many generations and in distant countries, have agreed in receiving the Bible as a divine revelation. Many of them have been noted for seriousness, erudition, penetration, and impartiality in judging of men and things. With much labour and patient investigation, they detected the impostures by which their contemporaries were duped: yet the same assiduous examination confirmed them in believing the Bible to be the word of God; and induced them to recommend it, living and dying, to all others, as the source of wisdom, hope, and consolation. In this view, even *the tradition of the church* has much weight: for, whatever abuse has been made of the term, by such as generally were no part of the true church; yet the whole company of those, who have worshipped the living God in spirit and truth, (including them who ventured and laid down their lives for conscience' sake, and who were the most pious, holy, and useful men in every age,) having unanimously concurred in handing down to us the Scriptures as a divine revelation, and having very little differed about the books which constitute that sacred deposit, must be allowed to be a consideration of great importance. And I cannot but suppose, that if a being of entire impartiality, of a sound mind, and a holy dis-

position, should be shewn the two companies, of those who have received, and those who have rejected, the Scriptures; and should compare the seriousness, learning, patient investigation of truth, solid judgment, holy lives, and composure in a dying hour, (without unmanly terror or indecent levity,) of the one company, with the character and conduct of the other, he would be induced to take up the Bible with profound veneration, and the strongest prepossession in its favour.

II. The agreement of the sacred writers among themselves is another cogent argument of their divine inspiration. Should an equal number of contemporaries, of the same country, education, habits, profession, natural disposition, and rank in life, concur in writing a book on religious subjects as large as the Bible, each furnishing his portion, without comparing notes together; the attentive reader, whose mind has been long inured to such studies, would be able to discover some diversity of opinion among them. But the penmen of the scripture succeeded each other, during the term of fifteen hundred years: some of them were princes and priests, others shepherds and fishermen; their natural abilities, education, habits, and employments, were exceedingly dissimilar; they wrote laws, history, prophecy, odes, devotional exercises, proverbs, parables, doctrines, and controversy; and each man had his distinct department: yet they all exactly coincide in the exhibition which they give us of the perfections, works, truths, and will of God; of the nature, situation, and obligations of man; of sin and salvation; of this world

and the next; and in short of all things connected with our duty, safety, interest, and comfort, and in the whole of the religion inculcated by them. They all were evidently of the same judgment; all aimed to establish the same principles, and applied them to the same practical purposes. *Apparent* inconsistences will indeed perplex the superficial reader, but they will vanish upon a more accurate investigation; nor can any charge of disagreement, among the writers of the Bible, be substantiated: for it can only be said, that they related the same facts with different circumstances which are perfectly reconcileable; and that they gave instructions suited to the persons whom they addressed, without systematically shewing the harmony of them with other parts of divine truth. They wrote not by concert, and bestowed no pains to avoid the appearance of inconsistency: yet the exact coincidence, that is perceived among them by the diligent student, is most astonishing, and cannot be accounted for on any rational principles, without admitting that they wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

To this we may add, that the scriptural *history* accords, in a wonderful manner, with the most authentick records which remain, of the events, customs, and manners of the countries and ages to which it stands related. The rise and fall of empires, the revolutions that have taken place in the world, and the grand outlines of chronology, as mentioned or referred to in the scriptures, are coincident with those stated by the most approved ancient writers: whilst the palpable *errors in these respects*, detected in the apocry-

phal books, constitute one of the most decisive reasons for rejecting them as spurious. The history of the Bible is of far greater antiquity than any other records extant in the world: and it is remarkable, that in numerous instances it shows the real origin of those absurd fables, which disgrace and obscure all other histories of those remote times; which is no feeble proof, that it was derived from some surer source of information than human tradition.

III. The *miracles*, by which the writers of the Scriptures confirmed their divine mission to their contemporaries, afford us also a most convincing proof in this matter. The accounts of these miracles may be evidently shewn to have been published, very soon after the time, and at the places, in which they were said to have been wrought in the most conspicuous manner, and before vast multitudes, enemies as well as friends: yet this publick challenge never called forth any man to deny that they were really performed; nor was an attempt of this kind ever made till long afterwards. Can any man of common sense think, that Moses and Aaron could possibly have persuaded the whole nation of Israel, that they had witnessed all the plagues of Egypt, passed through the Red Sea with the waters piled on each side of them, gathered the manna every morning; and seen all the wonders recorded in their history, had no such events taken place? If then, that generation could not thus be imposed on, when could the belief of these extraordinary transactions be palmed upon the nation? Surely, it would

have been impossible in the next age, to persuade them that their fathers had seen and experienced such wonderful things, when they had never before heard a single word about them in all their lives; and when an appeal must have been made to them, that these were things well known among them! What credit could have been obtained to such a forgery at any subsequent period? It would have been absolutely necessary, in making this attempt, to persuade the people, that such traditions had always been current among them; that the memory of them had for ages been perpetuated by days and ordinances, observed by all the nation; and that their whole civil and religious establishment had thence originated: and could this possibly have been effected if they all knew that no such memorials and traditions had ever before been heard of among them? —The same might be shown concerning the other miracles recorded in Scripture; especially those of Christ and his apostles: and it might be made evident that the man, who denies that they were actually performed, must believe more wonderful things without any evidence, than those are which he rejects, though established by unanswerable proof. But brevity will only allow me to insist on one miraculous event, viz. the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: for this being once proved, the substance of the whole Scripture is evinced to be a divine revelation. His doctrine and and authority establish the authenticity of the Old Testament, and the witnesses of his resurrection wrote the New Testament.

Almost all *human affairs* are conducted by testi-

mony: the occurrence of two or three unexceptionable witnesses is sufficient to prove any fact, that is in its own nature credible: and the resurrection of a dead person, by Omnipotence, and for the most important purposes, cannot reasonably be deemed incredible. The ancient prophets had predicted the resurrection of the Messiah;* and indeed every pre-intimation of his glorious and perpetual kingdom, when compared with the prophecies of his suffering and death, implied that he would rise again from the dead. His very enemies knew, that he had foretold his own resurrection *within three days*, and they took precautions accordingly: yet the body was gone, and they could give no rational account what was become of it. The whole authority was vested in them, and their reputation was deeply concerned: yet they rather chose to bear the open charge of the basest murder and prevarication imaginable, than to excite any further enquiry, by bringing either the soldiers who guarded the sepulchre, or the disciples who were said to have stolen the body, to a publick trial, though they had the latter in their custody. The eleven apostles (to whom a twelfth was soon added,) were a sufficient number of competent witnesses: being men of plain sense and blameless lives, they could not but identify the person of their Master whom they had so long attended: they unanimously testified, that they had received the fullest assurances of their senses to his resurrection, and at

* Ps. xvi. 10. Is. liii. 10—12.

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en; their timidity gave place
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expanded, and zeal for the ho-
h love to the souls of men,

seem to have engrossed and elevated all the powers of their mind.—There were also many other competent witnesses to the same great event, even to the number of five hundred; these too concurred in the same testimony to the end of their lives; and neither fear, nor hope, nor dissension among themselves, induced so much as one of them to vary from the testimony of the rest: nay, the very apostates from christianity, however malignant, never openly charged the apostles with an imposition in this respect. A more complete human testimony to any event cannot be imagined: for if our Lord had shown himself, "openly to "all the people" of the Jews, and their rulers had persisted in rejecting him; it would rather have weakened than have confirmed the evidence: and if they had unanimously received him as the Messiah, it might have excited in others a suspicion, that it was a plan concerted for aggrandizing the nation.

But God himself was also pleased to add his own testimony to that of his servants; conferring on them the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and enabling them to impart the same miraculous powers to others, by the laying on of their hands. Thus the number of witnesses continually increased, the testimony was more widely diffused, and no enemy could deny that they, who attested Christ's resurrection, performed most stupenduous miracles.* In consequence of this, the unlettered, unarmed, and despised preachers of a crucified

* Acts iv. 13—16.

and risen Saviour, prevailed against all the combined power, learning, wealth, superstition, and wickedness of the world, till christianity was completely established upon the ruins of Judaism and Pagan idolatry!—Here again, it may be demanded, when could the belief of such transactions have been obtruded on mankind, if they had never happened? Surely not in the age, when they were said to have been witnessed by tens of thousands, who were publickly challenged to deny them if they could! not in any subsequent age; for the origin of christianity was ascribed to them, and millions must have been persuaded, that they had always believed those things, which they had never till that time so much as heard of! We may then venture to assert, that no past event was ever so fully proved as our Lord's resurrection: and that it would not be half so preposterous to doubt, whether such a man as Julius Cæsar ever existed, as it would be to question whether Jesus actually arose from the dead.—What then do they mean, who oppose some little apparent variations in the account given of this event by the four Evangelists, (which have repeatedly been shown capable of an easy reconciliation;) to such an unparalleled complication of evidence that it did actually take place?

IV. The *prophecies* contained in the sacred Scriptures, and fulfilling to this day, prove them to be divinely inspired. These form a species of perpetual miracle, which challenges the investigation of men in every age; and which, though overlooked by the care-

less and prejudiced, cannot fail of producing conviction proportioned to the attention paid to them. The prophecies of the Messiah, which are found in almost all the books of the Old Testament, when compared with the exact accomplishment of them, as recorded in the authentick writings of the Evangelists, abundantly prove them to have been written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: whilst the existence of the Jews, as a people differing from all others upon the face of the earth, and their regard to these writings as the sacred oracles handed down from their progenitors, sufficiently vouch for their antiquity; though further proof in abundance is at hand, did brevity allow me to insist upon it. According to the predictions of these books, Nineveh has been desolated;* Babylon "swept "with the besom of destruction;"† Tyre is become a place to dry fishing nets in:‡ and Egypt "the basest "of the kingdoms," which has never since been able "to exalt itself among the nations."§ These and many other events, fulfilling ancient prophecies so many ages after they were delivered, can never be accounted for, except by allowing, that He, who sees the end from the beginning, thus revealed his secret purposes, that the accomplishment of them might prove the scriptures to be his word of instruction to mankind.

In like manner, there are evident predictions interwoven with the writings of almost every penman of

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* Nahum i. ii. iii. † Isaiah xiii. xiv. ‡ Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5. § Ezek. xxix. 14, 15.

the New Testament, as a divine attestation to the doctrine contained in them. The destruction of Jerusalem, with all the circumstances predicted in the evangelists, (an account of which may be seen in Josephus's History of the Jewish wars,) the series of ages, during which that city hath been "trodden under foot of the "Gentiles;" the long continued dispersion of the Jews, and the conversion of the nations to christianity; the many anti-christian corruptions of the gospel; the superstition, uncommanded austerities, idolatry, tyranny, and persecution of the Roman hierarchy; the division of the empire into ten kingdoms; their concurrence during many ages to support the usurpations of the church of Rome; and the existence of christianity to this day amidst so many enemies, who have used every possible method to destroy it; when diligently compared with the predictions of the New Testament, do not come short of the fullest demonstration which the case will admit of, that the books containing them are the unerring word of God.

V. Only the Scriptures (and such books as make them their basis) introduce the infinite God speaking in a manner worthy of himself, with simplicity, majesty, and authority. His character, as there delineated, comprises all possible excellence without any intermixture; his laws and ordinances accord to his perfections; his works and dispensations exhibit them; and all his dealings with his creatures bear the stamp of infinite wisdom, power, justice, purity, truth, goodness, and mercy, harmoniously displayed. The de-

scription there given of the state of the world and of human nature, widely differs from our ideas of them; yet facts unanswerably prove it to be exactly true. The records of every nation, the events of every age, and the history of every individual, confute men's self-flattery in this respect; and prove that the writers of the Bible knew the human character, better than any philosopher, ancient or modern, ever did. Their account teaches us what men are actually doing, and what may be expected from them: whilst all who form a different estimate of human nature find their principles inapplicable to facts, their theories incapable of being reduced to practice, and their expectations strangely disappointed. The Bible, well understood, enables us to account for those events, which have appeared inexplicable to men in every age: and the more carefully any one watches and scrutinizes all the motives, intentions, imaginations, and desires of his own heart, for a length of time; the clearer will it appear to him, that the Scriptures give a far more just account of his disposition and character, than he himself could have done. In short, it is capable of the fullest proof, that man is such a being, and the world in such a state, as the Bible describes: yet multiplied facts, constant observation, and reiterated experience, are insufficient to convince us of it, till we first learn it from these ancient records; and then, comparing all that passes within and around us with what we there read, we become more and more acquainted with our own hearts, and established in the belief of the divine original of the scriptures.

The *mysteries* contained in scripture rather confirm than invalidate this conclusion; for a pretended revelation without mystery would confute itself. Incomprehensibility is inseparable from God, and from all his works, even the most inconsiderable, as the growth of a blade of grass. The mysteries of the scriptures are sublime, interesting, and useful; they display the divine perfections, lay a foundation for our hope, and inculcate humility, reverence, love, and gratitude. What is incomprehensible must be mysterious: but it may be intelligible as far as revealed; and though it be connected with things above our reason, it may imply nothing contrary to it. Sothat, in all respects the contents of the Bible are suited to convince the serious enquirer, that it is the word of God.

VI. The *tendency* of the scriptures constitutes another unanswerable proof. Did all men believe and obey the Bible as a divine revelation, to what conduct would it lead them? and what would be the effect on society? Surely, repentance and renunciation of all vice and immorality, joined with the spiritual worship of God in his ordinances, faith in his mercy and truth through the mediation of his Son, and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as visible in the life of every true believer, would form such characters, and produce such effects, as the world has never yet witnessed. Men would then universally do justice, speak truth, shew mercy, exercise mutual forgiveness, follow after peace, bridle their appetites and passions, and lead sober, righteous, and godly lives. Murders, wars, bitter contentions,

cruel oppressions, and unrestrained licentiousness, would no more desolate the world, and fill it with misery; but righteousness, goodness, and truth would bless the earth with a felicity exceeding all our present conceptions. This is, no doubt, the direct tendency of the scriptural doctrines, precepts, motives, and promises: nothing is wanting to remedy the state of the world, and to fit men for the worship and felicity of heaven, but that they should believe and obey the Bible. And if many enormous crimes have been committed, under colour of zeal for christianity; this only proves the depravity of man's heart: for the scripture, soberly understood, most expressly forbids such practices; and men do not act thus, because they duly regard it, but because they will not believe and obey it.

The tendency of these principles is exhibited in the characters there delineated; whilst the consistency between the doctrines and precepts of Scripture, and the actions of men recorded in it, implies another argument of its divine original. The conduct of ungodly men, as there related, entirely accords with the abstract account given of human nature: and it appears that believers conducted themselves exactly in that manner, which the principles of the Bible might have led us to expect. They had like passions with other men; but they were habitually restrained and regulated by the fear and love of God, and by other holy affections. Their general behaviour was good, but not perfect; and sometimes their natural proneness to evil broke out, and made way for deeper humiliation and bitter

:pentance: so that they appear constantly to have per-
ived their need of forgiveness and divine assistance;
have expected their felicity from the rich mercy of
od; and, instead of abusing that consideration, to
ave deduced from it motives for gratitude, zeal, pa-
ence, meekness, and love to mankind.

But one character is exhibited, in the simplest and
ost unaffected manner, which is perfection itself.
hilosophers, Orators, and Poets, in their several
ays, have bestowed immense pains to delineate a
aultless character: and they have given us complete
odels of their own estimate of excellence, and suf-
cient proof that they laboured the point to the
tmost of their ability. But the four Evangelists,
hose divine inspiration is now frequently doubted on
he most frivolous pretences, without seeming to think
t, have done that which all other writers have failed
n. They have shown us a perfect human character,
y recording facts without making any comment on
hem, or showing the least ingenuity in the arrange-
ent of them. 'They have given the history of one,
whose spirit, words, and actions were in every par-
ticular what they ought to be; who always did the
very thing which was proper, and in the best manner
imaginable. Who never once deviated from the most
consummate wisdom, purity, benevolence, compas-
sion, meekness, humility, fortitude, patience, piety,
zeal, or any other excellency. And who in no in-
stance let one virtue or holy disposition entrench on
another, but exercised them all in entire harmony,
and exact proportion.'—'This subject challenges

'investigation, and sets infidelity at defiance. Either 'these four men exceeded, in genius and capacity, all 'other writers who ever lived; or they wrote under 'the guidance of divine inspiration: for, without labour 'or affectation they have performed what has baffled 'all others, who have set themselves purposely to ac- 'complish it.'* This is a fact which cannnot be denied. No perfect character is elsewhere delineated, and probably no mere man could have drawn, or even thought of such a character as Jesus. And this, I apprehend, with the entire agreement of the four Evangelists respecting it, demonstrates that they wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It has often been observed; that Satan would never have influenced men to write the Bible; for then he would have been "divided against himself:" wicked men would not have penned a book, which so awfully condemns their whole conduct: and good men would never have ascribed their own inventions to divine inspiration; especially as such forgeries are most severely reprobated in every part of it.—But indeed, it is a work as much exceeding every effort of mere man, as the sun surpasses those scanty illuminations, by which his splendour is imitated, or his absence supplied.

VII. The *actual effects* produced by the Scriptures evince their divine original. These are indeed far from being equal to their *tendency;* because, through human

* The author's Answer to Paine's Age of Reason, Vol. III. p. 441.

depravity, the gospel is not generally or fully believed and obeyed; yet they are very considerable; and we may assert that even at present there are many thousands, who have been reclaimed from a profane and immoral life, to sobriety, equity, truth, and piety, and to a good behaviour in relative life, by attending to the sacred Scriptures. Having been "made free from "sin, and become the servants of God, they have "their fruit unto holiness;" and after "patiently con-"tinuing in well doing," and cheerfully bearing various afflictions, they joyfully meet death, being supported by the hope of "eternal life as the gift of God "through Jesus Christ:" whilst they, who best know them, are most convinced, that they have been rendered wiser, holier, and happier, by believing the Bible; and that there is a reality in religion, though various interests and passions may keep them from duly embracing it. There are indeed enthusiasts; but they become such, by forsaking the *old* rule of faith and duty, for some *new* fancy: and there are hypocrites; but they attest the reality and excellency of religion, by deeming it worth their while to counterfeit it.

VIII. *Brevity* is so connected with *fulness* in the Scriptures, that they are a treasure of divine knowledge which can never be exhausted. The things, which are absolutely necessary to salvation, are few, simple, and obvious to the meanest capacity, provided it be accompanied with a humble teachable disposition: but the most learned, acute, and diligent student can-

not, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The deeper he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore; new light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge, to direct his conduct, and illustrate the works of God and the ways of men; and he will at last leave the world confessing, that the more he studied the Scriptures, the fuller conviction he had of his own ignorance and of their inestimable value.

IX. Lastly, "He that believeth hath the witness in "himself." The discoveries which he has made by the light of the Scripture; the experience he has had, that the Lord fulfils its promises to those who trust in them; the abiding effects produced by attending to it, on his own judgment, dispositions, and affections; and the earnests of heaven which he has enjoyed in communion with God, put the matter beyond all doubt. And though many believers are not qualified to dispute against infidels, they are enabled, through this inward testimony, to obey, and suffer for the gospel: and they can no more be convinced by reasonings and objections, that men invented the Bible, than they can be persuaded that men created the sun, while they behold its light and are cheered by its beams.

And now, if an objector could fully invalidate one half, or two thirds, of these arguments, (to which many more might easily be added,) the remainder would be abundantly sufficient. Nay, perhaps any one of them so far decides the question, that were there no *other proof* of the Bible being the word of God, a

man could not reject it, without acting in opposition to those dictates of common sense, which direct his conduct in his secular affairs. But in reality, I have a confidence that not one of these proofs can be fairly answered; at least it has never yet been done: and the combined force of the whole is so great, that the objections, by which men cavil against the truth, only resemble the foaming waves dashing against the deep-rooted rock, which has for ages defied their unavailing fury. Yet though these can effect nothing more, they may beat off the poor shipwrecked mariner, who was about to ascend it, in hopes of deliverance from impending destruction.

The consequences of our present conduct are, according to the Bible, so momentous, that if they were only a bare possibility of the truth of the Scriptures, it would be madness to run the risk of rejecting them, for the sake of gaining the whole world: what then is it, when we have such unanswerable demonstrations that they are the word of God and cannot reasonably doubt of it for a moment, to disobey the commands and neglect the salvation revealed in it, for the veriest trifle that can be proposed? Especially as it may be shewn, that (besides the eternal consequences) the firm belief of the Scriptures, and that conscientious obedience which true faith always produces, will render a man happier in this present life, even amidst trials and self-denying services, than he could be made by all the pomp, pleasure, wealth, power, and honour, which the world can bestow.

ESSAY II.

On the importance of revealed truth; the duty of reading the Scriptures; and the manner in which they should be read.

AS the Bible may be unanswerably proved to be the word of God, we should reason from it as from self-evident principles or demonstrated truths: for "His testimony is sure, making wise the simple."

Many parts of Scripture accord so well with the conclusions of our rational powers, when duly exercised, that either they might have been known without revelation, or else men have mistaken the capacity of *perceiving* truth for that of *discovering* it. Hence various controversies have arisen about *natural religion*, which many suppose to be rather taken for granted, than made known, by revelation. But the term is ambiguous: for the word *natural* includes *the propensities of our hearts*, as well as *the powers of our understandings;* and the same truths which accord to the latter, are often totally opposite to the former. The Gentiles might have known many things concerning God and his will, if they had "liked to retain him in

knowledge;" but their alienation of heart from
vailed to keep them in ignorance, or entangle
error. So that *the religion of reason* would ex-
e idea much more intelligibly.

however, is obvious, that many truths and pre-
hich are found in the Bible, have been main-
y persons who were ignorant of divine revela-
rejected it, or did not choose to own their ob-
s to it: and many others, who profess to receive
ptures as the word of God, assent to some
contained in them, not so much because they
aled, as because they think that they may be
by other arguments; whereas, they discard,
or explain away, those doctrines, which are
evident to their reason, or level with their ca-

So that at last it comes to this, that they re-
hat is thought peculiar to revelation; and refuse
ve the testimony of God, if their own reason
vouch for the truth of what he says.

y indeed be questioned, whether those opin-
ich men so confidently magnify as *the oracles*
n, were not originally, without exception, bor-
rom revelation, as far as there is any truth in
nd it is evident, that they cannot possess suffi-
rtainty, clearness, and authority, to render them
us principles of action, except as enforced by
n and its awful sanctions. The wildest enthu-
ver dreamed of a grosser absurdity than they
, who suppose that the only wise God hath
revelation to man, confirmed by miracles and
ies, and *established in the* world by the labours

and sufferings of his servants, and the crucifixion of his well-beloved Son, and that this revelation at last is found to contain nothing, but what we might have known as well without it! Nay, that it is expressed in such language, as has given occasion to those, who have most implicitly believed and reverentially obeyed it, to maintain sentiments, and adopt practices, erroneous and evil in themselves, and of fatal consequence to mankind!

We might, therefore, previously have expected that a revelation from God should illustrate, confirm, and enforce such things, as seem more level to our natural powers: and that it should make known to us many important matters, which we could not have otherwise discovered; and which would be found exceedingly different from all our notions and imaginations; seeing that our contracted views and limited capacities fall infinitely short of the omniscience of God. So that it is most reasonable to conclude, that the doctrinal truths, which more immediately relate to the divine nature, perfections, providence, and government; the invisible and eternal world; and the mysteries of redemption, constitute by far the most important part of revelation; as discovering to us those things "which eye hath not "seen, nor ear heard, neither have they entered into "the heart of man;" and which are at the same time essentially connected with our present hope, worship, and duty, and with our future happiness or misery.

He therefore cannot, according to the common use of language be called a believer, who only holds those doctrines which he regards as the dictates of reason as

ll as of revelation; whilst he rejects the testimony God whenever he *deems it unreasonable.* And may hence learn, what judgment to form of ose who affirm without hesitation, that the moral cepts and sanctions, with the more evident truths the Bible, are the only important part of it; that it of little consequence what men believe, especially ncerning those things which are in any degree mys- ious; and that none but narrow bigots, and weak d ignorant people, lay any stress upon *speculative inions.* "He that believeth not, maketh God a liar;" pecially he that believeth not the testimony which od hath given of his Son, and of eternal life bestowed sinners through him;* this is the uniform doctrine Scripture, and to contradict it is equivalent to a total jection of divine revelation. Can it be supposed that e prophets and apostles were commissioned, and at the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, died the cross, and rose from the dead, merely to in- rm mankind, that the Lord approved honesty, tem- rance, truth, and kindness, and disapproved the con- ary vices? Or that the unnumbered testimonies, hich the Scriptures contain, to the mysteries of the ivine Nature, the Person of the Redeemer, the work f redemption, and the influences of the Holy Spirit, ay, without any criminality, be disbelieved, derided, reviled; provided men are moral in their conduct wards one another? and that God is equally pleased ith those who thus affront his veracity, as with them

* John iii. 12—21, 31—36. John v. 9—12.

who implicitly submit to his teaching, and credit his testimony? If this be the case, in what does the difference between the infidel and the believer consist? All, except avowed atheists, will allow the propriety of many precepts, and the truth of some doctrines, coinciding with those of the Scriptures: but the infidel admits them as the dictates of reason, not as the testimony of God; and the pretended believer rejects all, without hesitation, that appears not to accord with the same standard. Thus both of them believe their own reasonings, "lean to their own understandings," and "make God a liar," when his testimony contradicts their self-confident decisions. It appears, therefore, that the prevailing notion, of the *comparatively small importance of doctrinal truth*, is subversive of revelation; and in fact is only a more plausible and a more dangerous species of infidelity.

If we believe the Scriptures to have been written by inspiration from God, and have any suitable apprehensions of his omniscience, veracity, and other perfections; we must be convinced, that it is the height of arrogance for us short-sighted erring creatures of yesterday, to speak of any doctrine contained in them, as false or doubtful, because it does not coincide with our reasonings or conceptions. Surely, a small portion of modesty and humility might suffice, to induce a confession, that *we* are more likely to be mistaken than the only wise God! In rejecting the doctrines evidently taught in the Bible, we must either arrogate to our own understanding a superiority above the *omniscience* of God, or impeach his veracity, or deny a

part of the Scriptures to be a divine revelation; reserving to ourselves the infallible determination of what part is of divine authority and what is not.—But if we think any part of the Scriptures, though true, to be of little or no importance, or of bad tendency, what do we, but affront the infinite wisdom or goodness of God, as if he did not know what truths were proper to be revealed to man; or as if he purposely discovered those matters, which it would have been better for mankind never to have known? And since it is evident that the Lord has, in the Bible, required the belief of certain doctrines as absolutely necessary to salvation; to insinuate that these doctrines are either false, doubtful, or of no value, must involve it in the grossest and most affronting blasphemy imaginable.

We do not indeed maintain that all the truths of revelation are of equal importance, because they are not stated in Scripture to be so: but none can be wholly unimportant, and we are not always competent to decide upon their comparative value. Some things are more obvious than others; and such, as are more hard to be understood, are not so well adapted to those "who are unstable, and unlearned" in the school of Christ: yet we are not authorized to reject, or even to doubt, any of them. We may indeed demur as to the doctrines revealed in them, whilst in humble reverent teachableness, we wait for clearer light upon the subject: and we must remain for some time in *partial* ignorance or error, because we cannot at once become acquainted with all scriptural truths, even when we have a disposition implicitly to believe them. There

are some things which relate to the very life and essence of true religion, while others are rather necessary to our stability, comfort, and holy conduct: these we must by no means reject, or treat with indifference; but it is possible, that, to the last, we may be mistaken or ignorant about some of them, and yet be found among the heirs of salvation.

The importance of revealed truth may be shown in another way; as it is the seed or principle in the soul, from which all inward or real holiness proceeds. Our Lord prays, "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is "truth."* And the apostle says, "beholding as in a "glass," (namely the doctrine of Christ) "the glory "of the Lord, we are changed into the same image."† And again "Without controversy great is *the myste-* "*ry of godliness*, God was manifest in the flesh." This doctrine was, in the judgment of the Apostle, "the "great mystery of *godliness*;" and indeed all the holy dispositions and affections towards God, all the genuine spiritual worship, all the willing obedience of filial love, and all the cheerful acquiescence in the divine will, and affiance on the divine truth and mercy, which have been found in the world since the fall of man, have arisen from a proper perception of this great truth, and the doctrines connected with it. Spirituality or supreme valuation of the holy excellence of spiritual things, and a disposition to seek pleasure and satisfaction in religion, is intimately connected with a believing dependence on the promised influences of the Holy Spi-

* *John* xvii. 17—19. † 2 Cor. iii. 18. iv. 3—6.

rit: and that view of the worth of the soul, the evil of sin, the justice and mercy of God, the vanity of the world, and the believer's obligations to a Saviour "who loved "him, and redeemed him to God with his blood," which the doctrine of the cross communicates, is essentially necessary to deep repentance, genuine humility, gratitude, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, love of enemies, and other parts of the christian temper and character. Without this, a *proud morality*, and a *task and form of godliness*, comprise the sum total of man's religion; except as he is brought under those impressions and leadings, which will in time influence him to embrace "the truth as it is in Jesus." This will appear more fully, and be proved more at large, in the subsequent Essays.—The importance of revealed truth, therefore, may be evidently perceived, both from the authority of him who speaks to us in the Scripture; from the various methods he has taken to confirm the words of his servants; and from the tendency and efficacy of sound doctrine to produce spiritual affections and holy obedience.

We grant indeed that the doctrines of Scripture may be received by a dead faith into the understanding *as true*, whilst the heart does not embrace them *as good;* and then they will "be held in unrighteousness." But a real and living belief of them is the proper root of true holiness. By regeneration the heart is prepared for thus receiving the truth, which then becomes the principle of progressive sanctification: "a whited "sepulchre" is the emblem of all that can be attained to, where this *is proudly rejected* or treated with in-

difference: and every man's spirituality, piety, h
lity, and enlarged, disinterested, unostentatious,
lanthropy, will bear proportion to the degree in v
he knows and cordially embraces the great doct
of the Bible.

It must, therefore, be evident, that every pers
whom the Scriptures are sent, ought to study t
and acquaint himself with their contents. For if
in compassion to our ignorance and love to our s
as well as in regard to the honour of his own nam
government, has given us a book, penned unde
inspiration of his Holy Spirit; and if the truths re
ed in it be of the greatest importance; it must be
reasonable, that we should bestow pains to acquir
knowledge of them. Whether we consider the S
tures as a revelation which the Lord hath made
of himself, that we may know, worship, and gl
him; or of his law and government, that we may
mit to and obey him, and learn our true conditic
sinners; or of his mercy and salvation, that we may
acceptance with him; or of the privileges of his
dren in this life and that which is to come: in e
view of the subject, the duty of "searching th
must be manifest. Nor can we neglect it, wit
avowing that we despise the knowledge of God
of heavenly things; that we do not desire to serv
Creator; that we neither value his favour nor fea
frown; or that we can discover the way of peace
happiness without his instruction. Nothing, there
can be more expressive of ingratitude, rebellion,
alienation from God, than the general neglect of

Bible, which prevails among those that profess to believe it to be his word.

Does He speak from Heaven to us sinners, about the way of eternal salvation, and shall we refuse to hear his gracious words? Does He give us a book to guide us to happiness in this world and for ever, and shall we not study it? Does He make known to us mortals those glories which angels adore with unceasing rapture, and shall we turn away with contemptuous aversion? Has He provided for us sinners such a redemption, as sinless "angels desire to look into;" and shall we think the subject unworthy of notice? Who can pretend to justify such conduct? Yet how much more pains do lawyers, physicians, and other students, who desire to excel in their professions, bestow in poring over voluminous authors, that men called christians do in searching the Scriptures! Yea, how many give a decided preference to amusing and ingenious trifles, or political discussions, (not to say publications suited to corrupt their principles and morals,) above the sacred word of God! They would be ashamed not to have read some admired or popular author, though the work perhaps be wholly useless, if not worse; yet they remain year after year, unacquainted with the holy Scriptures!—"Surely in vain is the word of the Lord "given to them; the pen of the scribes is in vain!"*

It cannot be necessary, in such a compendious Essay, to show particularly, how the study of the Scriptures is inculcated in every part of the sacred volume.

* Jer. viii. 8, 9.

Let the more attentive reader turn to what Moses sa
to Israel,* what the Psalmist teaches,† and Solomon
and what is contained in many passages of the Ne
Testament.§ Indeed the apostles and evangelists a
ways reasoned from the Scriptures of the Old Te
tament; appealed to them, and supposed the Je
to be acquainted with them; and in their writings a
sure us, "These things were written that we mig
"believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of Go
"and that believing we might have life through h
"name?"‖

The case is then plain, that our obligation to sear
the Scriptures is indispensable; and that it is a duty
the greatest importance. Every person who allo
them to be the infallible word of God, must be co
victed in his own conscience of acting in an unreaso
able and criminal manner, if he do not diligently stu
them; and the negligence of most men in this gr
concern, manifestly proves that they are not fully sat
fied that the Bible was given by inspiration from Go
and that it reveals the only way of peace and salvatio
We do not urge men to believe without evidence; b
we call upon them humbly and seriously to exami
the proofs afforded them, that the Scriptures are t
word of God: and then to bestow pains to learn th
religion contained in them, and to compare the do
trine we propose, with that unerring standard fro
which we profess to have learned it. Nor can we doub

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* Deut. vi. 6—9. xi. 18—20. † Ps. i. xix. cxix.
‡ Prov. ii. 1—6. § John v. 39, 40, Acts xvii. 1
Tim. iii. 15—17. ‖ John xx. 31.

but they, who will not comply with such requisitions, will be left without excuse at the day of final retribution, whatever excuses or pretences they may make at present. It may therefore be useful to give a few directions to those who are convinced of their duty in this particular; and desire to attend to it with profit to themselves, or those placed under their care.

I. *Examine the whole of the sacred Scriptures.*— I do not mean, that the same degree of attention and time should be employed about every part of the Bible; some things are but *remotely* useful to us; some are easily understood and applied: others require close and frequent investigation; while the obscurity of some passages renders them less adapted to the edification of unlearned readers. Yet every part of the sacred oracles has its use, and throws light upon the rest: and as preachers very properly make their appeal to the Scriptures in support of their doctrines; so their hearers cannot well judge how far their arguments are conclusive, unless they have a competent acquaintance with the whole of them. Nor is the Bible so large a book, but that even they who have not much leisure, may, in process of time, get a general acquaintance with every part of it, if they bestow a measure of diligence proportioned to the value of the acquisition; and as "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, "for instruction in righteousness; that the man of "God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto "good works;" *so every word* demands a measure of

our attention. It is, therefore, a very great hindrance to edification, when serious persons rest satisfied with *text-books*, and *abstracts* from Scripture, or with a few favourite passages that are continually resorted to, whilst the rest of God's word is little regarded; and above all, those parts are neglected, which teach men the particulars of the christian temper, and of those duties in which they are most deficient.

It has been found very useful by many, to divide the Bible into two or three parts, and to read a portion from each of them in order, in the morning, at noon, and in the evening, as people have leisure and opportunity: allowing more time to the New Testament, and to devotional parts of the Old; and reading these, wholly or principally, on the Lord's day, and on other seasons set apart for religion. This plan, pursued for a few years, will produce a familiar acquaintance with every part of Scripture. Singing the praises of God indeed very properly forms a part of family-worship, when time will permit: yet reading the Scriptures *in course*, (with a few exceptions, at the discretion of the person who officiates,) is a most excellent method of preparing the minds of children and servants for profiting by publick instruction, as well as for giving them a comprehensive view of our holy religion; and should therefore by no means be neglected.

It is also very advantageous to ministers and others who have much leisure, to vary their manner of reading: at some times going through a larger portion, with a more general regard to the scope of the sacred writer; at others minutely examining every word and

sentence in a smaller portion, its connexion with the context, and its coincidence with other parts of the Scripture; and marking carefully the harmony and mutual subserviency of every part of divine truth: the proportion of one part to another; the distinct parts of which the whole consists; and the way in which the several subjects are stated, handled, arranged, and expressed.

II. *Search the Scriptures daily.*—Divine truth is the food of the soul, which wants its nourishment as often as the body does. That day must have been mispent, in which no part of the Scriptures has been read or meditated on. We should, therefore, redeem time from indolence, recreation, useless visits, trifling conversation, and inordinate attention to secular affairs, for this employment: and then no *lawful* business would prevent any one from finding a little leisure, morning and evening at least, for reading some portion of the Scriptures: which would furnish the mind with subjects for meditation when not necessarily engrossed about other matters, to the exclusion of vain thoughts and polluting imaginations. The more habitual this practice becomes, the greater pleasure will it afford; and even the old christian will not think that his knowledge renders it superfluous, or seek an excuse for omitting it; but will apply to it, as a heathful person craves and relishes food.—I would especially enforce it upon the consciences of the young, not to let any day begin or end, without some time spent in studying the Bible: this will become in a short time a most

useful habit; and if they be abridged of a little sleep by this practice, their bodies will not be injured and their minds will be improved by it.—It may also be observed, that hearing sermons, reading religious books, or joining in pious discourse, will often mislead, and seldom profit, those who do not compare the whole with the sacred Scriptures, by "daily searching "them, to know whether these things are so or not."

III. *Read the Bible with the express purpose of appropriating the information communicated by it from God to man.*—When we have humbly and attentively considered and ascertained the meaning of any proposition; we should implicitly believe it, how contrary soever it may be to our former opinion, or that of others in reputation for wisdom. We ought to reverence the authority, omniscience, veracity, and faithfulness of the Lord, who speaks to us in his word: not doubting the truth or importance of any of his instructions, but studying the meaning of them in docility and patience. Thus deriving wisdom and knowledge from the source, through the appointed medium, we shall grow more learned in divine things, than any teachers or aged students who lean to their own understandings:* even as the bosom-friend of the prince, who learns his secrets from his own lips, will know more of his designs, than any conjectural politicians can do, though of far superior sagacity and abilities.

* Ps. cxix. 98—100.

IV. *Use helps in searching the Scriptures, but do ot depend on them.*—The labours of pious men, who ave spent their lives in studying and elucidating the cred oracles, may be very profitable to those who ther have less leisure or ability, or are newly engaged such researches; as an experienced guide may be those who are strangers to the road: and it savours reatly of self-sufficiency to undervalue either commen- tors or other writers on divine things. Yet all men e fallible, and we should call no man father upon earth: must, therefore, be proper to compare all their elu- idations, or inferences, with the Scriptures themselves. bove all it behoves us, "to ask wisdom of God;" nd to beg of him to give us the Holy Spirit, to re- nove from our minds every prejudice and carnal af- ection, and whatever may close them against any part f revealed truth, or indispose them to receive the il- umination of heaven; as the vitiated eye cannot make proper use of the light of the sun. He alone who in- pired the Scriptures, can help us to understand them: nd if we search them, in dependence on his teaching, nd in the spirit of fervent prayer, "He will lead us 'into all truth," as far as it is requisite for our safety, peace, and duty.

It may be proper here to caution the reader against *anciful interpretations*, which surprise and amuse, but nislead men from the practical meaning of Scripture: nd against those who pretend to *modernize* divine ruth; not choosing to "speak according to the oracles "of God," but as they suppose the apostles would have spoken, if they had possessed the advantage of

modern improvements: a supposition just as wise, as to attempt improving the light of the sun, by modern discoveries in astronomy! In short, every text has its proper meaning as it stands related to the context and its proper application to us: these we should seriously investigate, with fervent prayer for divine teaching; without presuming to add to, alter, or deduct from the revealed will of God.*

V. Lastly, we should search the Scriptures as the navigator consults his chart, and makes his observations, that he may discover where he is, and what course he must steer: as any one looks into a glass, that he may both know what manner of man he is, and learn to adjust what is unbecoming: or as an heir reads his fathers will, and the inventory of his effects and estates, that he may know what the inheritance is, and the nature of the tenure by which he must possess it. We should accompany our reading with impartial self-examination: both in respect of our knowledge, judgment, dispositions, affections, motives, words, and actions, in every particular, at present, and in times past; that we may learn the state and wants of our souls;—and with self-application, as the persons spoken to, in every instruction, precept, sanction, counsel, warning, invitation, or promise, according to our state, character, conduct, and circumstances; pausing to enquire, whether we understand what we have read, and what we have learned from it; that, beseeching the

* 1 Deut. xxix. 29.

to pardon what is past, and to help us for the
, we may, without delay or reserve, begin to
e what we know, waiting for further light in
natters, as still continue doubtful or obscure to
It would be easy to multiply directions: but the
ures thus studied are "able to make us wise
salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ."

ESSAY III.

On the Scriptural Character of God.

EVERY attentive and intelligent student of the Bible will perceive, that to preserve or recover man from idolatry, by instructing him in the character and perfections of the one living and true God, and the way in which he would be worshipped and served, was, in some respects, *the principal end for which revelation was vouchsafed.* The jealous care of Jehovah to distinguish between himself and every idol, and to secure the glory to himself without allowing any of it to be given to another; with the terrible denunciations pronounced against idolaters, and the severe judgments executed upon them, must attract the notice of all who are conversant with the sacred oracles, and convince every impartial person that idolatry is the greatest of all sins, atheism alone excepted.

Yet in this, as in other things, the "wisdom of man, "which is foolishness with God," has led numbers to adopt a contrary opinion: so that, whilst an elegant

l admired poet has employed his fascinating inge-
ity to persuade the inhabitants of a christian country,
t God is worshipped with equal acceptance, " by
aint; by savage, and by sage," or whether he be
led " Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,"* (in which con-
xion *Lord* may signify *Baal;*) it is also become a
hionable principle of *modern rational divinity*, that
such distinctions are immaterial, and all religions
y much alike, if men be only sincere in their way.
leed, numbers seem to think that what they call
otry, though wholly free from intolerance of perse-
ion, is worse than any *mental errors*, even in respect
he object of religious worship! and that candour
liberality of sentiment are more important virtues,
n the supreme love and spiritual adoration of Jeho-
, as distinguished from all false Gods.

But who does not perceive, that this principle if
ried to its obvious consequences, amounts to a re-
ion of the bible, or at least puts it on the same foot-
with the Theogonia of Hesiod, or the Koran of
homet? Who can avoid seeing, that it imputes
otry and a contracted mind to the prophets and
stles, and to every approved character of holy writ,
hout excepting our Lord himself? Nay, will it not
ow from it, that Jehovah wrought many stupend-
miracles to no manner of purpose? For we must
only enquire, why *Moses* was so careful to distin-
sh the God of Israel from the idols of Egypt, and

* Pope's Universal Prayer.

of the nations; or what induced *David* to expect assistance in meeting Goliah, who despised the armies of Jehovah, "that all the earth might know that there was a "God in Israel;"* or on what account *Elijah* was so earnest to determine whether the Lord or Baal was the true God:† but we must also demand, why Jehovah answered their expectations and prayers by miraculous interpositions, if the point to be decided were of little or no importance.—When the God of Hezekiah delivered him from the power of the Assyrians, by the sudden death of a hundred and eighty-five thousand men, whilst Sennacherib was slain by his own sons, as he was worshipping in the house "of Nisroch *his* "*god;*" the distinction between Jehovah and every idol was strongly marked.

These are a few out of the very numerous instances and proofs, which might be adduced from Scripture, to confirm this point; and, if duly regarded, would be abundantly sufficient for the purpose.—When our Lord told the woman of Samaria, that her nation "knew not what they worshipped, for salvation was "of the Jews;"‡ when *Paul* proposed to declare to the polite and philosophical Athenians that "unknown "God, whom they ignorantly worshipped;" and to distinguish the Creator and Judge of the world from all their idols;§ and when he informed the Corinthians that their idol-sacrifices were offered "to devils, and "not to God;"‖ they plainly shewed, that such can-

* Sam. xvii. 45—47. † 1 Kings xviii. ‡ John iv. 22—24.
§ Acts xvii. 23—31. ‖ 1 Cor. x. 20.

dour, as is now contended for, was absolutely incompatible with the religion which they intended to establish.

Indeed the apostle has informed us, that idolatry originated from men's aversion from God: "they "liked not to retain him in their knowledge."* His holy character and spiritual service did not suit their carnal minds: and therefore deities were invented of another sort, and a worship coincident with their corrupt inclinations was devised. When we consider how christian festivals are generally celebrated, we shall cease to wonder, that Israel preferred the golden calf to Jehovah; and joyously "sat down to eat and drink, "and rose up to play," instead of attending the sacred ordinances of the living God: and a competent knowledge of human nature will enable us, without difficulty, to account for the predilection, which that people ever manifested for the Gods of the nations, and their jovial and licentious rites. For, the religion of the Gentiles, instead of producing any salutary effect on their conduct, led them to practise the grossest enormities; not only without remorse, but in order to appease or find acceptance with their deities; and thus it tended to corrupt both their principles and morals. No doubt the great enemy of God and man, both from ambition of engrossing the worship of idolaters, and from the malignity of his nature, aided their invention, in forming the characters and imagining the exploits

* Rom. i. 18—23, 28.

of their deities, partly in resemblance of his own abominable propensities, and partly according to the worst vices of mankind; that so the most destructive crimes might be sanctioned, and the vilest affections, as it were, consecrated, by conformity to the objects of their worship. No wonder that they were ferocious in war, and debauched in their general conduct; when their religious observances consisted in the most savage cruelties, the most shameless licentiousness, and the greatest excesses of intemperance; and when at last they could not equal, in these respects, the gods whom they had invented for themselves.

If religion be supposed to produce any effect on the conduct of mankind, every person of common sense must allow, that the character and actions ascribed to the object of worship must be of the greatest possible importance: for as these are, so will the *sincere* worshipper be. To please, to resemble, to imitate the object of adoration, must be the supreme aim and ambition of every *devotee*, whether of Jupiter, Mars, Bacchus, Venus, Moloch, or Mammon; as well as of every spiritual worshipper of Jehovah: and we might therefore know what to expect from any man, if we were acquainted with his sentiments concerning the God whom he adores; provided we could ascertain the degree, in which he was *sincere* and *earnest* in his religion. It would have been absurd to expect much honesty from him, who *devotedly* worshipped Mercury as the god of thieving; much mercy from a devotee of Moloch; love of peace from the worshipper of Mars; or chastity from the priestess of Venus: and, whatever

philosophical speculators may imagine, both the Scriptures and profane history, ancient and modern, show, that the bulk of mankind in heathen nations were far more sincere in their absurd idolatries, and more influenced by them, than professed christians are by the Bible; because they were more congenial to corrupt nature. It is likewise a fact, that immense multitudes of human sacrifices are, at this day, annually offered according to the rules of a dark superstition; and various other flagrant immoralities sanctioned by religion, among those idolaters, who have been erroneously considered as the most inoffensive of the human race.

But these effects on the moral character of mankind are not peculiar to gross idolatry: if men fancy that they worship the true God alone, and yet form a wrong notion of his character and perfections; they only substitute a more refined idolatry in the place of paganism, and worship the creature of their own imagination, though not the work of their own hands: for in what does such an *ideal* Being, though called Jehovah, differ from that called Jupiter or Baal? The character ascribed to him may indeed come nearer the truth than the other, and the delusion may be more refined: but if it essentially differ from the scriptural character of God, the effect must be the same, in a measure, on those who earnestly desire to imitate, resemble, and please the object of their adoration.

When sinful men presume to delineate the character of God for themselves, however learned or sagacious they may be, their reasonings will inevitably be warped by the general depravity of fallen nature, and

by their own peculiar prejudices and vices. Partial to their own character, and indulgent to their master-passion, (which perhaps they mistake for an excellency,) they will naturally ascribe to the Deity what they value in themselves, and suppose him lenient to such things as *they* indulge and excuse: they will be sure to arrange their plan in such a manner, as to conclude themselves the object of his complacency, and entitled to his favour; or at least not deserving his abhorrence, and exposed to his avenging justice; they will consider *their own* judgment of what is fit and right, as the measure and rule of *his* government: their religious worship will accord to such mistaken conclusions; and the effect of their faith upon their conduct will be either inconsiderable or prejudicial. Thus men "think "that God is altogether such a one as themselves,"* and a self-flattering carnal religion is substituted for the humbling, holy, and spiritual gospel of Christ.

The different ideas which men form of God, whilst the scriptural character of him is overlooked, result from the various dispositions and propensities, which they derive from constitution, education, and habit. The voluptuary will imagine, with a certain dissolute monarch,† that 'God will not damn a man for taking 'a little pleasure in an irregular manner:' nor can the ambitious warrior, or covetous oppressor, be convinced that the supreme Being will demand a strict account

* Psalm l. 21. † Charles II.

of all the blood shed, or the injustice committed, in their respective pursuits. The speculating philosopher may imagine a Deity too dignified to notice the conduct, or too clement to punish the crimes, of puny mortals; at least he will suppose him very favourable to the self-wise, and such as are superior to vulgar prejudices, however he may act towards debauchees and sanguinary tyrants. Thus men's ideas of God are framed according to their own prevailing propensities: and then those ideas of him reciprocally tend to form their characters and influence their conduct, both with respect to religious duties, and in the common concerns of life.

These observations suffice to shew us the reason, why "the world by wisdom knew not God;" and to prove, that it is impossible in the very nature of things for a fallen creature to know him, except by revelation, and by faith appropriating the instruction thus vouchsafed; for self-love and carnal affections will so bias the mind, as to defeat the design of the most patient investigation, and to deduce erroneous conclusions from the most acurate and, apparently, most impartial reasonings upon this subject; except as they are conducted with a constant regard to the revelation which God has made of himself.

Thus the Jews *knew* not the God whom they zealously worshipped: they totally mistook his character, and therefore despised and rejected "the effulgency of "his glory, and the express image" of his invisible perfection; and they hated and persecuted, *most con-*

scientiously, his spiritual worshippers.* Would we then know God, in a saving and sanctifying manner,† we must not "lean to our understanding," nor "trust "in our own hearts;" we must not resort to the schools, or sit at the feet, of renowned philosophers, ancient or modern; but we must apply to the word of God himself, that we may thence learn, in humble teachableness and implicit faith, what we ought to think of his perfections, and of their glory and harmony; remembering that "his testimony is sure, making wise the "simple:" and likewise, that "no man knoweth the "Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son "will reveal him."‡

If then we carefully "search the Scriptures," we shall find that this subject constitutes a principal part of their contents; and that there are two ways in which the Lord makes himself known to us: 1. By express declarations:—and 2. By his works and dispensations, as illustrating and exemplifying such declarations. A few hints on each of these will constitute the remaining part of this Essay: it being chiefly intended to assist the serious student of the Scriptures, in profitably considering this important subject, as he proceeds with his daily researches.

I. We consider the Lord's *express declarations* concerning himself. There is a majesty in the passages of

* John viii. 54, 55. xv. 21—24. xvi. 2, 3.

† John xvii. 3. 2 Cor. iii. 18. iv. 3—6.

‡ Mat. xi. 25—30.

holy writ, that relate to the natural perfections of God, which vastly exceeds whatever is admired as sublime in pagan writers. Jehovah speaks of himself, as "The "high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity." "Hea- "ven is his throne, and the earth his footstool." "The "heaven of heavens cannot contain him." "All na- "tions before him are as nothing; they are counted "to him as less than nothing, and vanity." "From "everlasting to everlasting he is God;" "the Almighty, "the all-sufficient God." "His wisdom is infinite." "There is no searching of his understanding:" "He "knoweth all things." "He searcheth the hearts of "all the children of men; he knoweth their thoughts "afar off."—"There is no fleeing from his presence." "The light and darkness to him are both alike." "He dwelleth in light inaccessible; no man hath seen "or can see him." "He doeth what he will in the "armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the "earth." "His is the kingdom, and the power, and "the glory for ever;" "He is most blessed for ever- "more;" for "with him is no variableness or shadow "of turning." These and numberless other declara- tions, expressly and emphatically ascribe eternity, self- existence, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, immutability, incomprehensible greatness and majesty, and essential felicity and glory in full perfection, to the Lord our God.

But the instructions of Scripture do not materially differ from the deductions of reason on this subject, or at least from what it *approves* and *allows*. It is therefore principally to be observed, that such an infi-

nite Agent can, with most perfect ease, superintend the affairs of the universe, whether vast or minute: whereas some philosophers have supposed, that such would be either a degradation or an encumberance to him; thus virtually ascribing to him imperfection, and attempting to deprive him of his throne, as if he were not qualified to fill it!—It is, however, a consideration of peculiar importance, that infinite power, knowledge, and greatness, if they could subsist without infinite truth, justice, and goodness, would be terrible indeed beyond conception, yet not at all adorable or amiable; and these natural perfections do not so properly constitute any part of the *divine character*, as they define and describe Him to whom that character belongs. Accordingly, we continually read in the sacred Scriptures, that Jehovah "is righteous in all his ways and "holy in all his works," "He is," not only, "a God "of knowledge," but "by him actions are weighed." "A God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right "is he." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" for "he is of purer eyes than to behold evil." So that he is declared to be both infinitely holy in his nature, and unalterably righteous in his government of the world: for "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; "the Lord revengeth and is furious; he will take "vengeance on his adversaries."*—We are indeed told by speculating men, that such expressions are only an accommodation to human infirmity, and that

* Nah. i. 2—6.

ere are no such passions in the divine nature: and if ch remarks were intended merely to direct our in- pretation of them, and to remind us, that all that rturbation which anger and revenge excite in our inds, and all those effects which flow from them, ould be excluded from our apprehensions of the eity, they would be very proper. But surely, the ly wise God knows best what language to use con- rning himself! and we may safely "speak according to his oracles." Abhorrence of evil, and indignation ainst evil doers, are not sinful passions, but are re- iisite to perfect holiness; and to execute vengeance criminals is the indispensable duty of a ruler. We etend not to explain how these things subsist in the vine mind: but we know who has said, "Vengeance is mine, and I will recompense;" and we hesitate ot to repeat his words, without attempting to explain ay their awful import.

When we add to this delineation, the enlarged odness and liberality of the Lord, who delighteth in mmunicating being and blessedness, and "openeth his hand to fill all things living with plenteousness;" e perceive a character completely amiable, adorable, d glorious; and must allow the reasonableness of e command; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Yet these rfections thus combined, though peculiarly encou- aging to all obedient creatures, are most tremendous o *sinners*, who must be alarmed, and verge to despair, n proportion as they become acquainted with them;

unless they attend to the discovery of the Lord's plenteous, rich, and everlasting *mercy*. But *mercy* respects *misery*, and *transgression* as the cause; it pities and relieves misery, and pardons sin; and without this attribute, even the providential goodness of God would tend to aggravate our guilt, and increase our condemnation. Mercy, therefore, is spoken of in Scripture as the peculiar glory of God, and the grand subject of the believer's confidence, joy, and grateful praise. Yet, when the Lord "proclaims his name," as "merciful "and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering, and "ready to forgive;" he commonly gives some intimation, that he "will by no means clear the guilty," or the impenitent and unbelieving.* All his declarations of compassion and love to sinners, are connected with holy abhorrence and righteous indignation against their sins; and contain some intimations of that change, which his grace effects in those who share his pardoning love. Yet even this would be insufficient to render the exercise of mercy, (especially in that extent spoken of in Scripture,) consistent with the perfection of holiness and justice: for should mercy be shown to those who merit vengeance, and nothing done to counteract the tendency of such a measure, justice would appear imperfect, its rights would be violated, and its glory eclipsed; the law would be in a measure degraded, and the divine purity would not shine forth in its full splendour. Some intimations, therefore, were given from

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Nah. i. 2—8. Rom. iii. 19—24. 2 Pet. ii. 4—9.

the beginning, that mercy would be exercised in harmony with justice: and that Jehovah would, through the promised Seed, be "a just God and a Saviour."—Under the old dispensation, however, his servants seem rather to have believed that it would be so, than to have had clear perceptions of the mysterious way in which it would be effected: but the New Testament has removed the veil from the *subject*, as we shall easily perceive if "the veil do not still remain upon our hearts." This appears to be the only method in which the divine perfections could be displayed to us in all their glory: at least, all created understanding must for ever have proved incapable of conceiving in what way the largest exercise of pardon and love, to the vilest sinners, could consist with, and illustrate, the infinite justice and holiness of God, and establish his law in honour and authority. Infinite wisdom alone could devise a plan adequate to these purposes; it must spring from boundless love; and we may be sure, that the plan revealed to us was the most approved, of all that were possible, by infinite wisdom and love.

Every intimation, therefore, of a Messiah, a Mediator, a mercy-seat, a High Priest, or an atoning sacrifice, should lead our minds to the great doctrine of redemption through Emmanuel's blood, as the central point in which every part of the revelation, that God has made of himself to man, must meet. But without further anticipating this part of the subject, we may observe, that the Scriptures every where describe Jehovah, as perfect in wisdom, holiness, justice, truth, goodness, and mercy in all its various exercises; they represent these

attributes as the glory of his nature, and as constituting him the proper object of our supreme love, adoration, and service; as all harmonizing in his consummate character; and each subserving the exercise and glory of all his other perfections.

II. In more exactly investigating the Scriptures, we find these attributes exemplified, in the *works and dispensations* recorded of God. The display of his omnipotence and other natural perfections, in the works of creation, and in the miracles which he wrought for the deliverance of his servants or the punishment of his enemies, is too obvious to need a particular discussion; nor is it requisite to enlarge on his providential goodness. But that combination of justice, holiness, truth, and mercy, which has been stated as comprising he divine character, is manifested in his dealings with his rational creatures.—Infinite in holiness and justice "he spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them "down to hell." He denounced on fallen Adam and his race, the awful sentence, "Dust thou art and to "dust thou shalt return;" and in consequence of it, unnumbered millions have been swept into the grave by various dire and torturing diseases. The destruction of the old world by the deluge; that of Sodom and the neighbouring cities by fire; the plagues of Egypt; the vengeance executed on the Canaanites; and all the judgments inflicted on the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, in the promised land, and through every age; are such exhibitions of these awful attributes, that our minds *naturally* turn from the narrative

ith aversion: nor can any man fully understand them, l he has acquired a deep sense of the evil of sin, and the justice of God. Indeed the corrections inflicted n Lot, David, and other offending believers, whose ins were eventually pardoned, display the same attri- utes, and authorize the same conclusions; so that the 'salmist might well say, "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments."

On the other hand, the Lord's patience, compassion, ercy, and grace are exhibited in all his dealings with llen man: "he endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath;" he hath ever appeared ready forgive the penitent, to pity the wretched, to relieve e distressed, to lift up the self-abased, and comfort e broken-hearted. "His mercy is on those that fear him from generation to generation:" his dealings ith Israel and with individuals of that favoured nation, rove this; nor did any sinner ever humbly seek his ce in vain.—The *faithfulness* of God is so illustrated the accomplishment of his promise concerning "the Seed of the woman," four thousand years after it as given, that other instances need not be adduced. —His *judgments* coincided with his threatenings, except as repentance intervened; and a reserve of mercy as in that case implied in all of them. The manifold *wisdom* of God is also most conspicuous, in so arranging these displays of justice and mercy, as to secure e glory of all his attributes, and to leave no one any ground to presume, or to despair. And the discoveries made to us of the future judgment, and the eternal state of happiness or misery, most perfectly coincide with

the declarations relative to his harmonious perfectio
But of this, and of redemption by the incarnation
Emmanuel and his atoning blood, we must forbear
speak further in this place. We may observe, howev
concerning this last, which is doubtless the greatest
all the discoveries God hath given of himself, that
unavoidably leads us to fix our especial attention up
those mysteries of the Deity, which are so peculiar
revelation, that they, who, "lean to their own unde
"standing," would represent them as contradicto
and impossible. Yet, it will be shown that they a
certainly revealed in Scripture; and thence it will fo
low, that they are appropriated to the true Object
all adoration, and distinguish him from every id
so that those who reject the mysteries which it reveal
and adore not the One "Name of the Father, the So
"and the Holy Ghost," into which christians are ba
tized, cannot be said to worship that God, whose n
ture and perfections are declared in the sacred Scri
tures. And as all the divine attributes are seen, in pe
fect harmony, only "in the face of Jesus Christ;" th
"whose eyes are blinded, that they should not see t
"light of his glory,"* certainly worship the inventi
of their own hands, and not the God who hath reveal
himself to man, in the person of Jesus Christ. Inde
this is manifest, from the imperfection of the object
their worship, whom they delineate as so *clement*, t
he cannot hate and punish sin according to its dese
and by the blasphemies which they often utter again

* 2 Cor. iv. 3—6.

ıstice and holiness of God, and the judgments
he has executed and threatens to execute.—Let
n regard this, as a matter of the greatest possible
tance, and seek the knowledge of God, from his
and the teaching of his Spirit, as the fundamen-
ıcern in all our religious enquiries: that so we
e engaged, above all things, to fear, love, trust,
ip, and serve him; and to seek all our happiness
oying his favour, and glorifying his name.

ESSAY IV.

A brief exposition of the Ten Commandments, as comprising the substance of the Moral Law.

FROM the scriptural character of God, we proceed to the consideration of his moral government, as made known to us by revelation: and the clear knowledge of his holy *law* is peculiarly requisite, in forming our judgment on this subject. This was delivered to Israel by Jehovah himself, from mount Sinai, with most tremendous displays of his majesty, power, and holiness; and though other parts of Scripture must be adduced, as a divinely inspired comment; yet the decalogue may properly be taken for our text, in examining the demands of the *moral* law.

It is evident that there is a distinction between *moral precepts* and *positive institutions*. Some things are in themselves so indifferent, that the same authority, which commanded, might have forbidden them; as the use of bread and wine in one ordinance, and that of water in another: but it is absurd to suppose, that God could have required his creatures to despise him, or to hate one another; or have forbidden them to speak truth and to do justice.

Some traces of the moral law are discoverable by our natural reason, and the whole of it is highly reasonable: it has its foundation in the nature of God and man, in the relations which men bear to Him and to each other, and in the obligations that result from these relations; on which account it is immutable in its requirements, and demands obedience from all mankind, as far as they have opportunity of becoming acquainted with it. Different circumstances may indeed occasion a coincident variation; as the entrance of sin has rendered patience, and forgiveness of injuries, exercises of our love to God and our neighbour: but though there is no need of these in heaven, yet the grand principles from which they are deduced, will continue the same to eternity.

The law is also *spiritual:* that is, it takes cognizance of our *spirits*, or our most secret thoughts, desires, and dispositions; and demands the exact regulation of the judgment, will, and affections, in conformity to the holy excellencies of the Lord our God. It principally requires love, or the entire affection of the soul, without which the best external obedience is condemned as hypocrisy. This is peculiar to the law of God, who alone can search the heart: but in common with other laws, it demands entire, and uninterrupted, and perpetual obedience; for no law can tolerate the transgression of itself. From the commencement to the close of life, the Lord enjoins upon us exact conformity to every precept; the least deviation from this perfect rule, whether by omission or commission, ex-

cess or defect, is sin; and every sin deserves wrath, and needs forgiveness.*

The ten commandments are divinely commented upon in all the preceptive parts of Scripture; and the substance of them is summed up, in the two great commands of "loving God with all our heart, with all "our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength;" and of "loving our neighbour as ourself;" and we are authorized by our Lord's example,† to interpret every one of them in the strictest, most spiritual, and most extensive sense, of which it is capable. Even repentance, faith in Christ, and all other evangelical graces and duties, are exercises of this entire love to God, and are required of a sinner as placed under a dispensation of mercy; though originally the law had nothing to do with redemption, but lay at the foundation of another covenant. We may, therefore, wave the controversy concerning the *rule of duty;* whether that be the ten commandments, or the whole word of God: for the one, properly understood, will be found as broad as the other; seeing we cannot love God with all our hearts, unless we love every discovery which he is pleased to make of his glory, believe every testimony and embrace every promise which he gives, and seek his favour in the use of all the means that he is pleased to appoint. Yet this relates to the law, only as our *rule of duty*, and as *given in subserviency to the gospel;* for in other respects it contains nothing about repent-

* Rom. iii. 19—23. † Matt. v. 21—41.

ance, or the acceptance of imperfect obedience; but merely says, "Do this and live," and, "cursed be "every transgressor.

Thus the law was given to Israel, not only to show the people their real condition according to the covenant of works; but likewise with reference to their national covenant, and as the rule of duty to redeemed sinners: and therefore *mercy* is mentioned in the second commandment; not indeed as communicated by the law, but as shown by God to his obedient people. —The remainder of this Essay will consist of a compendious exposition of the ten commandments, as introductory to a further consideration of the divine government.

The great Lawgiver prefaced his injunctions, by proclaiming his own essential and immutable glory and perfection, "I am Jehovah." As the source of existence, and consequently of all power, wisdom, justice, truth, and goodness, he is the standard of excellence and beauty; from whom all created amiableness is an emanation, of whose glory it is a feeble reflection. To him alone the throne belongs. He only is qualified to be the universal Lawgiver and Judge; and he has the sole and unalienable title to that love and service which his law demands.—To this he added Thy God, to express Israel's relation and obligation to him. We are all his rational creatures, and every benefit which he bestows binds us more forcibly to love and obedience. We, like Israel, are his professed worshippers: if we be what we profess, he is our Portion and everlasting felicity; and this still enhances our

obligations to devote ourselves to his service. The redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ from sin and misery: and though all men *ought to obey the law of God*, yet none *do render any spiritual obedience to it* except his redeemed people.

After this solemn introduction, Jehovah first added, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The commandments are addressed, in the singular number, to each person; because every one is concerned in them on his own account: and each prohibition implies a positive duty. This first requires a disposition and conduct, suited to the relation in which we stand to "the "Lord our God." He alone is the adequate Object of our love, and able to satisfy our capacity of happiness: all we have and are belong to him, and he has an unalienable right to prescribe the use that we should make of his gifts. He has so clear a title to our love, gratitude, reverence, adoration, submission, confidence, and obedience; that we cannot withhold them from him without the most manifest injustice. Considering *who he is*, and *what he has done for us*, except we love him to the full extent of our natural powers, we do not render him his due: and if we did thus love him, all contrary affections would be excluded, all inferior affections subordinated. Admiring his excellency, desiring and delighting in him and his favour, being grateful for his kindness, and zealous for his glory, with all the energy of our souls; it is evident, that we should love other objects only for his sake, and according to his will: no creature could then rival him in our affections,

or prevail with us to neglect his service: and whilst we rendered him the tribute of adoring love and praise, and so glorified him, we should possess unalloyed felicity in the enjoyment of his favour. This is the reasonable state in which things ought to be; and all that deviates from it is sin, and the effect of apostacy from God.

In the preceding Essay, some thoughts have been offered on man's propensity to idolatry. To the disgrace of the human understanding, the grossest species of it have been almost universal in the world: and a more refined and plausible kind of idolatry has often supplanted them, in those few places where something more rational has prevailed. We need not, however, enlarge on this violation of the first commandment, or show particularly how the pagans, and Israel, and some parts of the professing church of Christ, by worshipping creatures, have ascribed to *them* the glory of those attributes which Jehovah incommunicably possesses. These practices constitute the grand transgression of this law: and all pretences to witchcraft, fortune-telling, charms, or incantations, partake in a measure of the same guilt; as by them information or assistance is professedly sought from creatures, whereas God should be wholly depended on, and submitted to.

But this *spiritual* precept reaches much further. To love, desire, delight in, or expect good from, any forbidden indulgence, even in the smallest degree, is evidently a violation of it: and to suffer the most excellent or amiable of creatures to rival God in our affections, must be a proportionable contempt of him.

By atheism and irreligion men set up themselves as gods, aspire to independence, reject subordination, and refuse to render homage or worship to any superior being; as if they had created themselves, and were sufficient for their own happiness! The proud man idolizes himself, and offers incense to his own deity; and therefore "God resisteth him" as his rival. The ambitious pay homage to the opinions of men, and seek happiness in their applause, or in such honourable distinctions as they can bestow. The revengeful usurp the throne of God, and invade the prerogative of him to "whom vengeance belongeth." The covetous man deifies his wealth, the sensualist his vile appetites, and the rapturous lover his mistress; he lives on her smiles, his heaven is placed in her favour, and her frown would make him the most wretched of all creatures. Nay, the doating husband and fond parent may deify the objects of their affections: for though they ought to love them tenderly, yet this affection, and the manner in which it is exercised, should be absolutely subordinated to the will and glory of God.

But no comment can equal the extent of the command. Whatever consists not with the most perfect love, gratitude, reverence, submission, and devotedness of the whole heart to God, is a transgression of it: and it requires us to love the Lord and all his creatures, according to their real worthiness; not more, nor less, except as finite beings cannot love infinite excellence in an adequate manner. Obedience to it would enthrone God in our judgment and affections; and the *whole of* our love being thus given to him, we should

ve all others for his sake, and according to the mea-
re that he has enjoined: whilst the violation of it de-
roys this regular subordination, and gives the creatures
e throne in our hearts. Well therefore, may it stand
remost in the decalogue; for our obedience in all other
ings depends on it: other transgressions injure the
ubject, and affront the Sovereign; but the violation of
is law is *high treason* against the majesty of heaven;
d at the same time is entirely destructive to the hap-
iness of all who transgress it.—The expression *be-*
re me implied that idolatry could not be kept so
cret, but that it must be known to the heart-search-
g God: it would at all times affront him *to his face;*
ut especially when committed by Israel, who had his
lory continually displayed before their eyes.

II. The second commandment requires us to render
o the Lord our God a worship and service, suited to
is perfections, and honourable to his name. His in-
omprehensible nature cannot be represented by any
imilitude. The most exquisite painting or sculpture
an only give an *external resemblance of a man:* even
nimal life with its several functions cannot be thus
xhibited, much less can a likeness be made of the
oul and its operations. How dishonourable then must
very attempt be to represent the infinite God, "by
silver or gold graven by art and man's device!" The
eneral disposition of mankind to form such similitudes
f the Deity, proves that low apprehensions of him
re congenial to our fallen nature; and the practice
as exceedingly increased the grossness of men's con-

ceptions concerning him. The more stupid of the heathen alone worshipped the picture or image itself; others used it as a visible representation of the invisible *Numen* or Deity: and all that ingenious papists have urged in behalf of their images, is equally applicable to Israel's worship of the golden calves, or to that rendered by the Ephesians to the image of Diana "which fell "down from Jupiter."—A material image of the Deity is likewise an affront to the Person of Christ, the only adequate "Image of the invisible God:" and the worship of saints and angels, as mediators and *present deities*, by images, in every respect robs him of his mediatorial glory.—The commandment does not prohibit the *making* of images and pictures for other purposes, (as some have ignorantly supposed;) for God commanded several to be made even in the construction of the tabernacle: but the *making* of them, in order to men's bowing down before them and worshipping them; and in this case both the maker and the worshipper of the image are involved in the guilt. The prohibition includes every kind of creature, because all are utterly unfit to represent the infinite Creator; and there are some devices not uncommon even among protestants, as emblematick of the Trinity, which seem not to accord to the strictness of this injunction.

But the spiritual import of the commandment extends much further. Superstition and human inventions in religious worship, when at all relied on as acceptable with God, are evident violations of its spirit and intent. The use of things indifferent in religion,

without any command from God, leads to gross conceptions of him as if he delighted in outward splendour or external forms; and is commonly connected with a false dependence; while it substitutes something else in the place of God's appointments, and tends to the usurpation of authority over men's consciences. But many *circumstances* of worship must be regulated by human discretion; and every one should judge for himself which regulations tend to these evils, and which do not; and be candid in judging such as differ from him.—Hypocrisy and formality, arising from unworthy apprehensions of God, together with those unscriptural delineations of his character that have been before described, are here certainly prohibited.—In short, the second commandment requires us to conceive of God, in all respects, as far as we are able, according to the revelation which he hath made of himself to us: to realize his glorious presence to our minds, *by faith, and not by fancy:* and to "worship him as a Spirit, in spirit and "in truth:" not with corporeal representations of him before our eyes, or low conceptions of him in our minds; but sincerely, inwardly, with the most fervent affections, and profound reverence of his infinite majesty, in *all* his appointed ordinances, and in them alone; and with frequency, as performing a service reasonable in itself, and most pleasant to our own souls, as well as honourable to his great Name.

The reason given for the prohibition of image-worship shews us, that the Lord is so tenacious of his honour in this matter, (especially in respect of his professed people,) *that the least* approach to it excites his

hottest displeasure; even as the jealous husband is e
asperated, and roused to seek vengeance, by whate
leads him to suspect his wife of adultery. If Isra
or any Israelites, revolted to idolatry, they wo
be deemed haters of God; as the wife would be su
posed to hate her husband, when she preferred ev
worthless stranger to him: and the national covena
with its peculiar blessings, being forfeited, the sins
the parents would involve their offspring in the puni
ment, even to the third or fourth generation. The menti
made of mercy, even to thousands, to vast multitud
through successive ages to the end of time, relates
the law as given in subserviency to the *gospel*, whi
was administered to the Israelites by their legal e
piations and purifications; and it shows how God d
lights in pardoning the penitent, and blessing the ob
dient. Thus the natural affection of men for th
children should have engaged the Israelites to obe
ence: and every means was used to keep them close
the instituted worship of God, and at a distance fr
all idolatry.

III. The worshippers of the Lord must have fi
quent occasion to mention his Name: and sometim
it will be requisite for them to call him to witness t
truth of their words, or to bind themselves by vo
and engagements as in his sight. The third comman
ment, therefore, forbids us to take the name of t
"Lord our God *in vain;*" that is, to use it nee
lessly, irreverently, profanely, or in fraud, dissimul
tion, and hypocrisy. It forbids all rash and unlawf
and such as relate to things uncertain or

ticable.—Perjury, of every kind, is the capital
ggression of it: for by this men appeal to the om-
cient heart-searching God for the truth of what they
tify or assert, or for their sincerity in what they en-
ge to do; when they do not know the truth of the
, and are consciously insincere in the other. This
one of the most atrocious and provoking crimes
ginable, though common among us to an incon-
rable degree; so that it is little noticed unless ac-
mpanied with flagrant injustice! But, alas! it is very
sely connected with other instances of disregard to
s law; by the unnecessary multiplication of oaths in
r judicial transactions, even on the most frivolous
asions; and by being administered with extreme
verence, instead of all the solemnity of a religious
inance, which every thinking person msut allow to
reasonable.—All appeals to God in common con-
sation, with such expressions, as 'the Lord knows,'
n the matter attested is either not true or not im-
tant, involves a measure of the same guilt.—All
sing and swearing are a most horrid violation of
commandment.—The use of the words, 'God
ord, Christ,' or such like, without necessity, serious-
s, and reverence; whether in *improper* religious dis-
rse, or as expletives in talking about other subjects:
ry expression, that takes the form of an abjuration
mprecation, though the name of God be not used:
ed, all that is more than "yea, yea, nay, nay,"
is, every thing which, in common conversation,
s beyond a simple affirmation or denial: all jesting
h God's *word or sacred things*: all irreverence to

whatever relates to him; and the use of his tremendous name, in religious worship, in a heedless or hypocritical manner: all these, I say, are violations of the spirit of this law. Moreover, it implies a command to remember habitually, the infinite majesty, purity, and excellency of God, and to behave towards him, in word and deed, with that awe and reverence of his perfections, which becomes such mean and worthless creatures, in his infinitely glorious presence.

To this law it is added, that God "will not hold "the transgressor guiltless." Men may not discover, or they may neglect to punish, this crime; and the sinner's conscience may scarcely trouble him about it: but let him know, that God will certainly detect and punish that atrocious affront which is thus put upon him, and often without the plea of temptation, or expectation of profit or pleasure; unless men can find pleasure in disobeying and defying their Creator. But when it shall at last be said to the daring transgressor, "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of "the Lord?" his profane trifling will be turned into terror and despair.

IV. The form of the fourth commandment implies, that it had been previously known to Israel; though they were prone to forget it. The separation of a portion of our time to the immediate service of God is doubtless of *moral obligation;* for his glory, and our good, personal and social, temporal and eternal, are intimately connected with it: but the exact proportion, as well as the particular day, may be considered as of

ositive institution. Yet the proportion of one day in even seems to have been fixed, by infinite wisdom as nost proper, in every age of the world: though the change of the dispensation, after the resurrection of Christ, has occasioned an alteration of the day, and in addition to the topicks, which call for peculiar commemoration and contemplation on this season of sacred rest. The sabbath among the Israelites was also ceremonial, and therefore it formed a part of their ritual law: and being introduced into the judicial law, the violation of it was punishable by the magistrate; which seems also to be proper in all communities where Christianity is professed. Six days are allowed us for the diligent performance of our worldly business: but the seventh is consecrated to the immediate service of the Lord. The concerns of our souls must indeed be attended to, and our God worshipped, on every day, that our business may be regulated in subserviency to his will: but on the other days of the week we should do *all our work*, with the sole exception of works of charity, piety and necessity: for these alone consist with the holiness of that sacred day of rest; and are allowable, because "the sabbath was made for "man, not man for the sabbath." All works, therefore, of avarice, distrust, luxury, vanity, and self-indulgence, are entirely prohibited. Our affairs should be previously so arranged, that as little as possible, of a secular nature, may interrupt the sacred duties of the Lord's day. Trading, paying wages, settling accounts, writing letters of business, or reading books on ordinary subjects, trifling visits, journeys, excursions, dissipation, or conversation which serves only for amuse-

ment cannot consist with "keeping a day holy to the "Lord" and sloth is a *carnal* not a *spiritual* rest. The sabbath should be a cessation from worldly labour, and a rest in the service of God: serious self-examination, perusal of the Scriptures, private, social, and public worship, instruction of children and servants, meditation, and pious conversation, should occupy our time from morning till evening; except as these duties are suspended by attention to such things, as really conduce to our own good or that of others. All this is obligatory on those who can do it: but servants and others, may be under a *real necessity* of doing things, not *necessary* in themselves; though liberty in this respect should be preferred to emolument, and good management might often greatly lessen the evil. Were our love to God and spiritual things as intense as it ought to be, we should count a day thus spent our great delight; for heaven will be an eternal rest, not essentially differing from it. All our aversion from this strictness arises from "the carnal mind "which is enmity against God;" and the advantages that would accrue from thus hallowing the sabbath, to the morals, health, liberty, and happiness of mankind, are so many and obvious, that they who doubt its obligation often allow its expediency. But men should not only forbear to employ their children, servants, or cattle in any needless work; they should also with authority require them to keep holy the Lord's day, which is greatly intended for *their* benefit. The cattle must also be allowed to rest from the hard labour of husbandry, journeys, and other employments inconsistent with trade or pleasure; though doubt-

may employ *them too*, in works of necessity,
nd charity: and thus they may properly be
r the gentle service of conveying those to places
ick worship, who could not otherwise attend,
rm the duties to which they are called: yet
ion and self-indulgence multiply violations of
d's day in this respect. Even strangers, resid-
ng us, should be persuaded to hallow, and re-
from profaning, the sabbath.—It was indeed
ly instituted in honour of God our Creator:
are adduced in other parts of Scripture, which
ly respected the Jews, or referred to the cause
anity: but redemption by Christ, as completed
surrection, and the descent of the Holy Ghost
y him, are especially commemorated by chris-
hilst they hallow the first day of the week, as
d's day; and this title given to it, in the New
ent, when duly considered, clearly shows how
ed hours should be employed.

very compendious exposition of the first table
w suffices to prove its requirements to be very
e, spiritual, reasonable, and beneficial; yet we
nfess it to be entirely contrary to the disposi-
our hearts, and diverse from the tenour of our
d therefore we all need mercy, redemption,
ew creation to holiness, in order that we may
God and be made fit for heaven.—We proceed
cond table.

The commandment, which requires us to hon-
parents, must be considered as the abstract of

our relative duties. All other relations spring from that of parents and children, or in a measure partake of its nature; and this most nearly resembles our relation to the great Creator.—Children are required to *honour* their parents; which implies that it is the duty of parents to behave honourably, by diligently performing the several parts of their important charge, as entrusted with the care of their offspring, both body and soul; and by a becoming deportment in all other respects.—Yet children are not absolved from their duty by the misconduct of their parents, who must answer for it to God: and such a limitation, in this and other relative precepts, would absurdly constitute all the inferior relations judges and lords over their superiors. Children derive their being under God, from their parents: and they are generally taken care of by them, during helpless infancy and inexperienced youth, with much labour and expence. It is therefore reasonable, that they should *so long* obey them unreservedly in all things lawful; and *afterwards* in all things that are not manifestly injurious to themselves, though they may be disagreeable. They ought to love the persons of their parents; respect their characters, counsels, and instructions; consult their interest, credit, and comfort; conceal their infirmities, bear with their tempers and humours, alleviate their sorrows, and rejoice their hearts as far as possible; and when they are grown old and incapable of maintaining themselves; the children are bound, if able, even to labour for their support, as the parents did for them when they were infants. In all this both parents are equally included, and should alike be hon-

oured and obeyed, and not in opposition to one another; which shows that they should set their children an example of *impartiality*, and be *harmonious* in their conduct towards them.—By parity of reason, they, who have acted a parent's part, are entitled to a correspondent respect and deference: and all the superior and inferior relations have their several reciprocal duties, which may be *referred* to this command: these will, however, be distinctly considered in separate Essays.* —The annexed promise of long life to obedient children might have a peculiar reference to the covenant of Israel; yet careful observers of mankind have noted its remarkable fulfilment in other nations. Subordination in the family and community tends to personal and publick felicity; and the dislike, which the human heart bears to *submission*, renders it proper to enforce it by motives of every kind.

VI. The sixth commandment requires us to "love "our neighbour as ourselves," in respect of his *person* and *life*. Magistrates as "God's ministers in exe- "cuting vengeance," are in some cases *commanded* to put men to death; and in others it may be *allowable*, because conducive to the publick good. Witnesses or executioners may concur in such capital punishments. We may doubtless take away another's life in defence of our own; and *perhaps*, when peculiarly circumstanced, in defence of our property.—Some wars are ne-

* Essays xx, xxi.

cessary, and the blood shed in them is not imputed as murder to those that shed it: yet the guilt of it must rest somewhere; and alas! few wars are so entered upon and conducted, as to leave any of the contending parties free from blood-guiltiness. A man may by misfortune kill another: yet God condemns as *wilful murder* many of those actions by which life is taken away, but which are called by our law *manslaughter*. Furious passion, excited by sudden provocation or drunkenness, is no where in Scripture excepted from the general rule, "He who sheddeth man's "blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The duellist is a revengeful muderer of the most atrocious kind. —All fighting for wagers, or renown, violates this command, and the blood thus shed is *murder, atrocious murder*. Whatever, by force or stratagem, deprives another of his life, is prohibited. All the slaughter committed by oppressions, persecutions, or attempts to deprive of liberty, or confine in slavery, our unoffending fellow-creatures on any pretence whatever, is wilful cruel murder. What then shall we think of the accursed slave-trade, which will surely bring vengeance on this nation, if much longer tolerated?—Even laws, needlessly sanguinary, (as I fear many are in this land,) involve all concerned, in this enormous guilt: and they, who ought to punish the murderer, and who yet suffer him to escape, will be numbered among the abettors of his crime at God's tribunal.

The commandment likewise prohibits us to assault, maim, or wound others, or to assist those who do; to tempt men to crimes which destroy the constitution,

or endanger their lives, either from the sword of justice, or the resentment of the injured party; nay, to entice them, by the prospect of a large reward to such enterprizes and labours as are known generally to shorten life. Many parents and wives are *murdered* by the gross misconduct of their children or husband; and numbers will be found guilty of transgressing this law, by covetously or maliciously wishing the death of others. The spiritual import of the commandment prohibits all envy, revenge, hatred, or causeless anger; all that insulting language which provokes to wrath and murder; and all the pride, ambition, or covetousness which prompt to it. Nay, that man will be condemned as the hater and murderer of his brother who, seeing his life endangered by the want of food, raiment, or medicine, and having ability to relieve him, selfishly neglects to do it.*—But the murder of the soul is still more heinous. This is committed by seducing men to sin; by a bad example; by disseminating poisonous principles; by terrifying others from religion by persecution, or by reviling or ridiculing those who attend to it; and by withholding due instructions, warnings, and counsels, especially such as parents owe to their children, or ministers to their people: and it is tremendous to think, what numbers will be thus condemned as the murderers of the souls of men.

The heinousness of *suicide* likewise should be especially marked. It is in some respects the most malignant of all murders; and, as scarcely ever repented

* 1 John iii. 15—17.

of, it combines the guilt of murdering both soul and body at once. We were not the authors, and are not the lords, of our own lives: nor may we leave our assigned post, or rush without a summons into the presence of our Judge; any more than we may execute vengeance on our neighbour, or send him to the tribunal of God. Self-murder may be easily shown to be a complication of ingratitude, contempt of the Lord's goodness in giving and preserving life, defiance, impatience, pride, rebellion, and infidelity; nor is it in general the effect of *insanity*, (as verdicts, in which perjury is committed from false tenderness, would lead us to suppose;) except as all are in some sense *insane*, who are hurried on by fierce passions and Satan's temptations. That original murderer knows this present life to be the only season, in which salvation can be obtained: and therefore, he tempts men to such excesses as destroy the constitution, or as render life miserable; and he urges them on to suicide, that he may destroy both body and soul by their own hands, not being permitted to do it by his power. Extravagance, discontent, and despondency should therefore be most carefully avoided; and gratitude, patience, and hope most diligently cultivated.—In a word, this command requires enlarged benevolence, kindness, long-suffering, and forgiveness; and a disposition to seek the welfare, in all respects, of every human being.

VII. The seventh commandment regulates our love to our neighbours, in respect of their *purity and domestick comfort;* and requires the proper government

those inclinations, which God hath implanted in or-
r to the increase of the human species. The mar-
age of one man with one woman was originally the
stitution of the Creator, and not merely *a civil con-
act*, as some pretend: these "became one flesh,"
separably united to each other, to promote and share
e another's satisfactions, and to assist each other in
ery duty, and especially in educating with combined
tention their common offspring. The entrance of sin
d death made way for the dissolution of this union;
variety of evils began to embitter the relation, and
uses were soon introduced. But though some things
re formerly *connived* at, which did not accord with
e original institution; yet Christ refers his disciples
that as the standard of honourable marriage, as far
the change of circumstances admit of it. The force
quired by men's passions, in consequence of sin,
nders the "prevention of fornication" one express
d of marriage: mutual forbearance and reciprocal
mpliances are now needful and incumbent: the sor-
ws of the female sex, as well as the afflictions of life,
quire peculiar sympathy to alleviate the anguish of
e suffering party: and the separating stroke of death
ives the survivor free to take another companion.
We must not then define adultery, as prohibited in
is commandment, according to the judicial law of
loses, but by the decision of Christ; with which po-
gamy, and divorce (except for unfaithfulness) are
terly incompatible.—It is evident, that marriage,
cognized in some appointed way to distinguish it
om illicit connexions, gives each party such a pro-

perty in the other's person and affections, that ever violation of conjugal fidelity, on either side, is *adultery* according to the New Testament; and is far more deserving of death, (if we estimate crimes by their mischievous effects,) than many offences which are capitally punished.—All other commerce between the sexes is prohibited by the spirit of this law; from the temporary connexions, that are formed and dissolved at pleasure, to the lowest scenes of prostitution.—The difference between the *tempters* and the *tempted*, and other circumstances, vary the degree of guilt contracted; for the seducer's character is diabolical: but fornication is marked in almost every black catalogue in the Scripture; and, however men may be deceived by vain words, its dire effects on the human species prove the *goodness*, as well as the *justice*, of God in thus strictly forbidding it, and in threatening those who violate the prohibition, with his severest indignation.

Under the word *lasciviousness* various transgressions are denoted, which cannot be mentioned without offence; and every thing, which does not comport with the design of marriage, though sanctioned by the name, violates the spiritual meaning of the prohibition. All impure conversation, imaginations, or desires, are likewise condemned by this law. "He that looketh "on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adul"tery with her already in his heart." Writing, reading, publishing, vending, or circulating obscene books, exposing to view indecent pictures or statues, or whatever else may excite men's passions, must partake of the same guilt: and wit, elegance, and ingenuity only

ease the mischief, wherever the specious poison is inistered. All the arts of dress, motion, or de- ıour, which form temptations to heedless youth; all those blandishments, insinuations, amorous s and words, which subserve seduction, fall under ame censure. In short, the commandment requires ıtmost purity, both of body and soul, in secret as as before men; with a holy indifference to animal lgences, and the strictest government of all the tites, senses, and passions: and it enjoins the desire endeavour of preserving the same disposition and viour in all others, as far as we have it in our power.

III. The eighth commandment is the law of love spect of *property*. The productions of the earth btained and prepared for use by labour: this gives erty, and that justly descends to the owner's pos- or heirs. From this and similar causes, com- ıg their effects for ages, originates the difference en's outward circumstances. That portion, which onestly obtain, is "the bread that God hath given :" and with this we should be satisfied. But men's ons crave more; and sloth refuses to labour: e force and fraud are employed to get possession ıe property of others, without their free consent. need not enumerate those violations, of which hu- laws take cognizance: but men may in various break the divine law, and yet escape present shment. Fraudulent bargains which impose on gnorant, credulous, or necessitous; abuse of con- ce, extortion, exorbitant gain, deceitful combina-

tions to enhance the price of goods or labour, or to lower the wages of the poor, will be condemned at God's tribunal as violations of this command. The overgrown ravager of nations and provinces will be adjudged a principal thief and robber, without any other distinction. *Defrauding the publick*, (whether by oppressive rulers, who burden the people with merciless exactions; or by those who embezzle the treasures committed to their stewardship; or by smuggling, and in various other ways evading the payment of taxes,) constitutes a most atrocious transgression of this law. Contracting debts to support vanity and luxury, or in pursuit of some scheme of aggrandizement, or for any thing not absolutely necessary, without a fair prospect of paying; taking advantage of *humane* laws, to evade payment when the insolvents would be again able to pay, were they contented with a frugal maintenance; all extravagance, beyond the sober allowance of a man's income; and slothfulness, or *unnecessary* subsistence upon charity, are violations of it in different ways. Nay, to withhold from real objects of compassion proper relief; or to reduce the wages of the poor so low as hardly to allow them a subsistence, in order that men may live in affluence and enrich their families, by no means consists with its evident demands. In short, the spirit of it prohibits inordinate love of the world, covetousness, luxury, and the pride of life; and requires industry, frugality, sobriety, submission to Providence, and a disposition "to do to *all* others," in respect of worldly property, "as we would they should do unto us."

IX. The ninth commandment is the law of love, as it respects our neighbour's *reputation:* though, in the connexion of human affairs, the violation of it may likewise affect his property and life; and bearing false witness, in a court of justice among us, may be perjury, robbery, and murder, as well as calumny. In such important concerns, we should attest nothing of which we have not the fullest assurance; and every human passion should be watched over, that our evidence may not be warped. We should be exact *to a word* in reporting what we know, and in speaking the truth, and no more than the truth: and equal caution is required in juries, and in the judge who decides the cause.—The malicious invention and circulation of slanderous reports, to the injury of a person's character, is a heinous violation of this commandment. To do this in sport, is an imitation of the madman, who "throws about fire brands, arrows, and death," for his diversion. To spread such stories as others have framed to the discredit of our neighbour, when we suspect them to be false or aggravated; or even, if we suppose or know them to be true, when there is no real occasion for it, (such as the detection of a mischievous hypocrite or designing villain,) is prohibited by this law: for the practice results from pride, self-preference, malevolence, or conceited affectation of wit and humour. Severe censures, bitter sarcasm, ridicule, harsh judgments, ascribing good actions to bad motives, innuendos, misrepresentations, collecting and vending family anecdotes, and various other practices of the same nature, consist not with it.—This com-

mandment is frequently violated by authors; a lie or slander is far worse when printed than when only spoken; and religious controversy is too generally disgraced by the most abominable calumnies: for *bigots* of all parties agree in mistating the actions, misquoting the writings, and misreporting the words of their opponents.—All *lies* are a violation of this law. They are in every possible case an abuse of speech, and of our neighbour's confidence, and a derogation from the value of truth; and always in some degree injurious to mankind.—Envy likewise of the praise conferred on others runs counter to the spirit of the law. In short it requires sincerity, truth, fidelity, candour and caution: with a disposition to honour what is honourable in all men, and to be as tender of their reputation, as we could reasonably expect them to be of ours. With this in constant view, our feelings will instruct us how far the rule should extend its influence on our conduct.

X. Lastly, we are commanded not to covet any thing that is our neighbour's. This restriction is placed as the fence of all the rest: the apostle's reference to it* shows that it comprises the utmost spirituality of the law; and it is a perpetual confutation of all those systems, by which the outward gross crime is considered as the only violation. We must not *desire* any thing whatever, which God forbids or withholds: and so far from levelling property, or seizing violently on

* Rom. vii. 7, 8.

our neighbour's possessions, we may not so much as hanker after them. The most secret wish for another man's wife violates this precept: but to desire an union with an unmarried woman, becomes sinful only when excessive, and when it is not submitted to the will of God if he render it impracticable. We may desire that part of a man's property which he is inclined to dispose of, if we mean to obtain it only on equitable terms; but what he chooses to keep we may not covet. The poor man may desire moderate relief from the rich: but he must not hanker after his affluence, or repine even if he do not relieve him. Men, exposed to equal hazards, may agree to a proportionable contribution to him who suffers loss; for it accords with the law of love to help the distressed. This exculpates *insurance* when fairly conducted. But every species of *gaming* originates from an undue desire and hope of increasing our property, by proportionably impoverishing others; and is therefore a direct violation of this law. Publick gaming by lotteries, so far from being less criminal than other species of that vice, is the worst of them all: for it abets and sanctions, as far as example and concurrence can do it, a practice which opens the door to every species of fraud and villainy; which is pregnant with the most extensive evils to the community and to individuals; which seldom fails to bring several to an untimely end, by suicide or the sentence of the law; which unsettles an immense multitude from the honest employments of their station, to run in quest of imaginary wealth; and which exposes them to manifold temptations, unfits

them for returning to their usual mode of life, and often materially injures their circumstances, breaks their spirits, sours their tempers, and excites the worst passions of which they are susceptible. Indeed, the evils, political, moral, and religious, of lotteries, are too glaring to be denied, even by those who plead necessity for continuing them; and too numerous to be recapitulated in this place. Can it therefore consist with the law of God, "Thou shalt not covet," or with the character of a christian, to concur in such an iniquitous and nefarious system, from a vain desire of irregular gain? Whatever argument proves it unlawful for two or three men to cast lots for a sum of money, or to game in any other way, much more strongly concludes against a million of persons gaming publickly by a lottery for a month or six weeks together, to the stagnation, in a great measure, of every other business;* whilst the gain made by government and by individuals, from the stakes deposited with them, renders it as imprudent as it is sinful in the adventurers; for every individual stakes *three to two on an even chance*, if a covetous appeal to Providence may be called chance †—Even *Tontines* seem not wholly excusable, as they constitute a kind of complicated wager

* Many alterations have, since this was written, been adopted, to prevent the mischief; and perhaps these may have some effect: but the whole concern is radically and deeply *evil*, and nothing can possibly render it any other than *evil, atrociously evil.*

† Prov. xvi. 33.

about longevity, to be decided by Providence in favour of the survivors; and must therefore be equally culpable with other games of chance. Coveting other men's property contrary to the law of love, and enriching the survivors, commonly at the expence of the relatives of the deceased, are intimately connected with them; whilst they prove a strong temptation secretly to wish the death of others, for the sake of advantages which are inordinately desired and irregularly pursued.—In fine, discontent, distrust, love of wealth, pleasure, and grandeur, desire of change, the habit of wishing, and every inordinate affection, are the evils here prohibited; and we know them to be the sources of all other crimes, and of man's misery. And the command requires moderation in respect of all worldly things, submission to God, acquiescence in his will, love to his commands, and a reliance on him for the *daily* supply of all our wants as he sees good.

We cannot close this brief explication of the divine law, (in which we find nothing redundant, nothing defective, nothing injurious, but all things holy, and just, and good,) more properly, than by the words of our church-service, 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' (forgive all our past transgressions,) 'and write all 'these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee.'

ESSAY V.

On Man's situation, as a Sinner, in the present wor

THE apostle has defined sin to be "the transgr "sion of the law,"* and whatever, in any respect degree, deviates from that perfect rule, is *sin*, and e poses a man to condemnation. "By the law," the fore, "is the knowledge of sin:"† the better we u derstand the holy, just, and good commandments God, the more enlarged will be our acquaintance w the vast variety of sins that are continually committe as well as with the evil and desert of every transgr sion: and a comprehensive knowledge of our wh duty is essential to a just estimate of our own charact or of our situation in respect to eternal judgment.

But we should not attend only to the *requireme* and *prohibitions* of the divine law: its *sanctions* a demand our most serious consideration. Indeed, stri ly speaking, the law, as distinguished from the gosp is merely *a rule* and *a sanction: a rule* formed by in nite wisdom, holiness, and goodness, and enforced

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* 1 John iii. 4. † Rom. iii. 20.

preme authority; *a sanction* to be awarded by im-
ntable justice and almighty power, according to the
clarations of eternal truth. Repentance and amend-
ent are right, and accord to the spirit of the com-
andment; but they make no compensation for trans-
ression, and are not noticed by the law: and the mercy
xercised by the Law-giver has reference to the pro-
isions of another covenant. Perfect obedience is the
niform demand of the precept; condemnation inevi-
bly follows transgression.—"Whosoever shall keep
the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is
guilty of all;"* even as a man is condemned for
olating one of the many statutes of the realm, in a
ngle instance, though no other offence be charged
pon him. The apostle therefore declares, that "as
many as are of the works of the law, are under the
curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that
continueth not," (during his whole life,) "in all
things which are written in the book of the law, to
do them:"† and the *moral law* must at least be in-
uded in this general language. They alone, who have
: all times perfectly kept the whole law, can have any
laim to the reward which it proposes, for "the man
that doeth" the commandments "shall live in them,"
ut "the soul that sinneth shall die." And as "all have
sinned, and come short of the glory of God," (of
ndering to him the glory due to his name:) so *in*
is respect "there is no difference:" "Every mouth
shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty

* James ii. 8—11 † Gal. iii. 10. Deut xxvii. 15—26.

" before God;"* though an immense difference will be found between some men and others, in respect of the nature, number, and aggravations, of their offences. All attempts, therefore, in a sinner to justify himself, must result from ignorance of God, of the divine law, and of his own character; or from a disposition to impeach the strictness of the law, and the justice of the Lawgiver.

Our Lord himself explains the import of "the "*curse* of the law," (from which he redeemed his people, "being made a curse for them,") when he forewarns us, that he will say to the wicked at the day of judgment, "Depart from me, ye *cursed*, into ever- "lasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:— "and these shall go away into everlasting punish- "ment."† In reflecting on this awful subject, we should recollect that *man* is constituted of body and soul; and that the soul *purposes* the acts of disobedience, while the body *executes* its purposes: so that it is highly *reasonable* to suppose, that the soul will at least share the punishment which the law denounces against the offender. When, therefore, the apostle would remind his brethren of their obligations to the Lord Jesus, he says, "Who delivereth us from the "wrath to come;"‡ whence it is evident, that he considered himself, and all the christians in the world, as having been exposed, not only to present effects of the divine displeasure, (from which Jesus does not deliver

* Rom. iii. 9—23. † Matt. xxv. 41—46. ‡ 1 Thes. i. 10.

people,) but also to future condemnation. The nal transgression, when, "by one man sin en-ed into the world, and death by sin," was indeed lation of a positive injunction; but love to God, mself, and to his posterity, absolutely required m to obey it: so that by disobedience he fell un-he curse of the law, which doubtless existed and in full force from the creation, in respect of its itial requirements. And the event sufficiently es, that all Adam's posterity were interested in transaction, and fell with him: for it is an undeni-fact, that men are universally prone to break the of God, and universally liable to pain, suffering, death. All who truly believe the Bible, will rest fied with the scriptural account of this mysterious ect: others will never be able to account for the of the world on any principles that are more ra-l: and the proper answer to those, who object to vident fact as inconsistent with divine justice, wis-, and goodness, has been already given by the tle, "Nay but, O man, who art thou, that repli-t against God?"

ut our situation, as sinners, in the present world, not here be considered so much the effect of m's sin, as of our personal transgressions: for, tever we might argue concerning those "who ve not sinned after the similitude of Adam's trans-ression," by willingly and knowingly preferring r own inclinations to God's express command-t: such as are capable of reading this Essay, will ly pretend that they have never once sinned in manner.—It is evident then, that "it is appoint

" ed to men once to die;" the sentence, " dust ye are, " and to dust ye shall return," overtakes every one: no vigour, or power, or wisdom; no learning, or wealth, or efforts, or virtue, can rescue any man from this common lot of our fallen race: only two exceptions have hitherto been made to the general rule; no more are to be expected; and few have ever been so absurd as to think of eluding or overcoming the universal conqueror. But " after death is the judgment;" and though few are willing to believe the solemn truth; yet it would have been found equally impossible for any sinner to escape condemnation, at that decisive season, had not mercy brought in another hope by Jesus Christ.

If we judge of dispositions and actions by the holy law of God, we shall not long be able even to doubt but that all men are *born in sin*, and are by nature propense to evil and averse from good. " That which is " born of the flesh, is flesh;" and " the carnal mind," which is natural to us, " is enmity against God."* It is the universal law of the creation, that every plant or animal possesses the properties of that from which it was derived. When Adam became a sinner he begat sons " in his own likeness:" and that, which the Creator had pronounced " very good" soon became very bad. " God saw that the wickedness of man was " great in the earth; and that every imagination of " the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." " The earth also was corrupt before God; and the

* Rom. viii. 5—9.

"earth was filled with violence." "And God looked "upon the earth and behold it was corrupt; for all "flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth;"* and so it evidently continues to this day.—If men argue, that all the wickedness of the world results from education, habit, and example; we enquire how it came to pass, that bad education, bad habits, and bad examples, became so general, if the nature of man were not bad also? But the impossibility, in the ordinary course of things, of "bringing a clean thing out of "an unclean,"† points out the real cause of the universal prevalence of vice and impiety.

It must be allowed by all observing and impartial persons, that men in general, in all parts of the earth, are very different, in their dispositions and conduct, from what the law of God requires them to be. It is also most certain, that they are liable to a vast variety of miseries and pains; that anxiety, vexation, disappointment, and dissatisfaction are inseparable from every earthly condition, pursuit, possession, and connexion; that life itself is short and uncertain; that the approach and stroke of death is almost always accompanied with grievous sufferings, if not with terror and dismay; that every earthly pursuit and enjoyment must shortly be terminated; and that the body however active, vigorous, comely, pampered, or decorated it may now be, must be consigned to the dark and noisome tomb, there to moulder to its original dust. All this would be very gloomy and dreary, even if it

* Gen. vi. 6—12. † Job, xiv. 4. xv. 14.

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could be certainly known that nothing further was to be apprehended: but a future state of righteous retribution must exceedingly enhance the horror of the prospect, to such persons as are condemned at the bar of their own consciences. The expectation of a future state seems congenial to the human mind; and the arguments of various kinds, which have been urged in proof of the immortality of the soul, and other doctrines connected with it, are so cogent, as to evince such expectations to be the result of serious reflection, and not the offspring of credulity, superstition, or imposture: nay, facts manifestly show, that no ingenuity or efforts can wholly erase the idea, even from the minds of such persons as are most deeply interested, and most earnestly desirous, to find it a mere groundless imagination.

But this expectation of a future state is far too vague and confused for practical purposes. The ignorance of men in general concerning the perfections, commands, and government of God, united to the self-flattery of the human heart, preserves them in great measure from that terror, which the thoughts of a future judgment, if considered apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, must inspire: so that the more men know of God and of themselves, the greater horror will be associated with the prospect of death and judgment; except it be dispelled by "joy and peace in "believing."*

The immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the

* Rom. xv. 13.

ody, a future judgment, and a state of righteous re-
ribution, are doctrines most expressly revealed to us
y " the sure testimony of God:" and so clear and
xplicit are the Scriptures on these topicks, that
carcely any thing, but the consciousness of such con-
luct as weakens the hope of eternal felicity, connected
ith reluctance to admit the dread of eternal misery,
ould be sufficient to induce men to deny or argue
gainst the real *eternity* of that state, which com-
nences at death, and shall be confirmed and com-
leted at the day of judgment: whilst the absurdity of
easoning against the justice and goodness of what
od has done, or declared he will do, seems the sum-
it of man's pride, presumption, and folly.—The
reeks were a speculating people, and could not but
ave the idea of *duration without end*, which is all the
dea of eternity that we can obtain. Now the strongest
ords in their very copious language are employed
y the sacred writers on this subject; and I appre-
end, that the expression, translated *for ever and ever*,
lways means *eternal* in the strictest sense of the word.
f, however, any one should make the trial, he would
carcely find more energetick phrases, in the whole
ompass of the Greek language, as authorized by the
example of ancient writers, to express the idea of
eternal misery, than are to be found in the New Tes-
tament. The very words are used on this awful sub-
ject, by which the *eternity* of heavenly felicity, and
the *eternal* existence of God, are expressed, and in
the same manner: the repeated declarations concern-
ing the wicked, that " *their* worm never dieth,"
(which must denote eternal consciousness and self-

reflection,) that "*their* fire shall never be quenched;" with the words "eternal punishment," "the blackness of darkness for ever," &c. most obviously imply this alarming doctrine.

It may hereafter be shown, that sinful creatures must continue guilty and polluted; yea, must increase in evil propensities, and multiply crimes to all eternity, whatever they suffer; unless they are changed by an exertion of almighty power, and pardoned by an act of free mercy. Not the most remote hint is given through the whole Scriptures, that mercy or grace will be vouchsafed to any who die in their sins, or that God will ever annihilate his rebellious creatures; but every thing warrants the opposite conclusion. It evidently answers the purpose of the enemies of our souls, and forwards their work of temptation and destruction, to persuade men that they will not be finally miserable, though they continue impenitent, and indulge their lusts till death: and the folly and madness of those, who profess to believe the Bible to be the word of God, yet sin on, in hopes of finding all the denunciations which it contains to this effect, false or unmeaning, and who buoy up their own and other men's presumption with vain reasonings and sophistical arguments, is great beyond expression!

Our sentiments will not alter the purposes of God; it is therefore as irrational as it is uncandid, to charge those with want of sensibility, compassion, or philanthropy, who explain such Scriptures in their most obvious meaning; and who warn and persuade men by "the terror of the Lord," to repent and seek salvation. If several persons were fast asleep in a house on

re, we should best express our kindness and com-
ssion, by alarming them speedily and even violently,
d so, forwarding their escape; and not by leaving
hem to sleep on, lest they should be too much terri-
ed. They who really believe that all impenitent and
nbelieving sinners will be for ever miserable, suppose
uch men to be in a condition infinitely more tremen-
ous than the persons above-mentioned; and they
nnot but endeavour to convince them of their dan-
r, before it be for ever too late: the more they love
em, the greater will be their earnestness in "warn-
ing them to flee from the wrath to come:" and they
en show their philanthropy, by spending their time
incessant labours, and by distributing their pro-
rty, to relieve the miseries of mankind; and some-
mes even by laying down their lives for their
od.

We may also observe, that the Scriptures uniformly
eak of *two ways*, *two descriptions of men*, and *two
laces*, to which they are removed at death; and never
timate a middle path, state, or character: nor do
ey mention any alteration, in the condition either of
e righteous or the wicked; except as the resurrec-
ion will re unite their bodies to their souls, and dis-
lay to the whole world the justice and mercy of God
n his dealings with them. All purgatories therefore,
hether before or after the day of judgment, are
holly unscriptural: and all reasonings on this sub-
ct are vain and presumptuous attempts to remove
he great gulph which God hath fixed;" and calcu-
d to take men off from preparing seriously for that

day, when "the wicked shall go away into eternal "punishment, and the righteous into eternal life."

It appears, therefore, that every man lies under a twofold condemnation for his sins: he is sentenced to various temporal sufferings, which are to be terminated by death; and to eternal misery in another world: and if any one should object to this, on the supposition that his sins do not merit so tremendous a punishment, I would enquire, whether human legislators and judges ever think the criminals themselves competent to decide on the equity of statutes and decisions? Or, whether we are indeed capable of determining the degree of evil, contained in rebellion against the authority of the infinite Creator; and what punishment the glory of his name, and the everlasting advantage of the whole creation, may require him to inflict upon transgressors? In respect of the former part of this sentence, alleviations and respite alone can be expected: but we may hope for the entire abolition of the latter, as we live under a dispensation of mercy, through the great Mediator of the new covenant. On this salvation we shall hereafter enlarge; at present it suffices to say with the Psalmist, "If thou, Lord, shoudest "mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? but there "is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be "feared."

The inevitable certainty of death: the uncertainty of the time and manner in which each person shall die; with the manifold troubles and sorrows of life, the turbulency of the passions, the remorse and terrors, and the anguish of the closing scene of wicked men; bear no faint resemblance to the confinement, chains, and

tortures of a condemned criminal, terminating only in his execution. The miseries, which they occasion to each other, aptly represent those scenes, that meet the observation of such persons as are conversant with prisons; in which wretched men have little relief from the anguish of their own minds, except in reproaching and plaguing their companions in guilt: while the dissipated, sensual, and noisy pleasure, by which at other times they stun reflection, and excite a transient turbulent joy, resembles the drunken carousals of the criminals singing and dancing in their chains, and the infatuated levity of some of them even to the very moment of execution. But the believer has another prospect opened to his view: he is indeed a criminal, but he is pardoned and reconciled to his Prince; a few days he must abide in his prison, previously to his regular discharge; but when the other criminals shall be led to execution, he will not only be set at liberty, but admitted to the presence and full favour of his gracious Benefactor, ennobled with the greatest dignities, and enriched beyond expression. In the mean time, the hopes and earnests of such felicity support and solace his mind, and he knows, amidst his pains and sorrows, that "blessed is he, whose iniquities are "forgiven, and whose sins are covered."

The uncertain continuance of this vain life is the term allotted us, by the long-suffering of our offended God, to seek the reversal of that part of the sentence which relates to our final condemnation. To direct our course in this important pursuit, "unto us "are committed the oracles of God:" "which are able "to make us wise unto salvation, by faith in Jesus

information, counsels, invitations, warnings, promises suited to our case, are there given [illegible] are appointed, in which we may [illegible] for every needful blessing; and especially the Holy Spirit is promised to all, who humbly depend on his gracious teaching, sanctifying, and comforting influences, and seek these blessings by earnest prayer: so that no one (whatever his sins, habits, temptations, or situation may be,) can come short of his salvation; provided he apply for it in the appointed way, and with a diligence suited to its inestimable value. This is the situation of every man, so long as life continues; for, that *judicial* blindness and obduracy, to which many are given up, consists in a total and final neglect, contempt, or abuse of this salvation: but when death removes one, and then another, out of this world, his opportunity is gone, and his state fixed to all eternity.

We are then, criminals, reprieved for a short and uncertain time by the mercy of our Prince, that we may have an opportunity of casting ourselves on his clemency, and seeking forgiveness in a way which for his own glory he has prescribed. If we avail ourselves of this advantage, the more terrible part of our punishment will be remitted, and the remainder counterbalanced by most animating hopes and consolations, sanctified to our greatest good, and soon terminating in everlasting felicity: but, if we neglect so great salvation, our vain and vexatious worldly pursuits and vanities will soon close in final and eternal misery.

Our first great business and interest, therefore, during our present uncertain state, must be, to pre-

pare for death and judgment, by seeking "eternal "life, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our "Lord:" for if we succeed in this grand concern, all inferior disappointments or losses will shortly be most amply made up to us; but if we fail in this respect, our present successes will only serve to aggravate our future anguish. Every pursuit, which is incompatible with this primary interest, must be madness and ruin, however fashionable, reputable, lucrative, or agreeable. Not only inferior elegances, distinctions, and honours; but even crowns and sceptres, the splendour of courts, the councils of statesmen and senators, the grand concerns of empires, yea, "all the kingdoms "of the world, and all the glory of them," dwindle into utter insignificance, and fade as a withering flower, when compared with eternal happiness or misery; "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole "world and lose his own soul?" The soul of man, bearing the natural image of God, in its noble powers and faculties; capable of being renewed to his moral image "in righteousness and true holiness;" endued with the capacity of most exquisite pleasure, or most inconceivable anguish; and formed to subsist in happiness or misery, through the countless ages of eternity; is lost, when the favour and image of God are finally forfeited; and when it is condemned to endure his tremendous wrath, and to be given up to the unrestrained fury of all vile affections, in the company of fallen spirits, for ever. This loss is incurred by sin; but the forfeiture is ratified by the sinner's persevering impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience. The pleasure, profit, honour, power, or ease, which

men seek by continuing in sin, is the price of their souls; and they are so infatuated, as thus to sell them for the most worthless trifles; because (like our first parents) they credit Satan's lies more than the truth of God, through desire of the forbidden fruit; or because they put off the grand concern to a future season, and quiet their consciences, (as debtors do their importunate creditors,) by fixing on some future time of intended amendment; or because they think their state good, when God's word declares the contrary. Thus their opportunity elapses, and too late they understand the energy of the question, "What shall a man give "in exchange for his soul?"

This shows us the importance of our Lord's exhortation, "Seek *first* the kingdom of God, and his righ- "teousness." Admission into that kingdom, which God has set up among men by the gospel of his Son, the privileges of which consist in "righteousness, peace, "and joy in the Holy Ghost;" the holiness and blessings of that kingdom for ourselves, and the peace, prosperity, and enlargement of it in the word, should be sought by diligence in all appointed means, as our grand objects, with the first and best of our time and affections, in preference to all other things, and with a willingness to venture, or part with, whatever comes in competition with them: even if that should be our estates, liberty, friends, or life itself. We are not even allowed to "fear them who can only kill the body, and "after that have no more that they can do;" when this would lead us to incur the displeasure of the Almighty, "who is able to destroy both body and soul in "hell." A proper attention to our worldly business and interests is a part of our duty to God, to his church,

ie community, and to our families; every thing
il and expedient, may thus be rendered subservi-
o our grand object; and all things needful will be
d to us. But men are ruined by reversing this or-
and *seeking first* "the world, and the things that
: in the world," namely, "the lust of the flesh,
: lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."
ven where gross vices and open ungodliness are
led, how greatly are persons of all ranks, endow-
:s, and professions, "careful and troubled about ma-
things;" instead of attending simply and diligent-
the "one thing needful," and decidedly "choos-
ʒ that good part, which could never be taken
›m them!" Men's thoughts, contrivances, hopes
ears, joys and sorrows, maxims, wisdom, assiduity,
conversation, are almost wholly engrossed by the
ihing vexatious trifles of time. Every vague,
ige, and uninteresting report is more attended to,
"the glad tidings of salvation;" every science is
ned better worth cultivating, than the knowledge
od; every question is thought sufficiently import-
o set the ingenuity of men at work to give it a
factory answer, except it be enquired, "What
ust we do to be saved?"—Such topicks as this ex-
only astonishment, disgust, and a short silence,
ome more congenial subject is started! If a man
end to teach the way to health, to riches, to the
yment of life, or how to appear to advantage in
ipany, assiduous attention and liberal compensation
not be withheld: but they, who would instruct
ı in the way of eternal life, must not expect great
ʒeneral regard, even when they desire no other re-
npence.

But time and room would fail should we att
enumerate the proofs of man's folly and madnes
respect. Even the very messages of God, res
judgment, eternity, and the great salvation of t
pel, instead of meeting with serious regard,
quently set to musick, and profanely employe
ry the species of pleasurable dissipation! Nay,
often preached, out of ostentation, avarice, e
strife; heard as a matter of curiosity or amusem
contended for in pride, virulence, and furiou
The grand business of most men seems to be,
the burden of reflection, to cause time to glid
as imperceptibly as possible, and so, *apparer*
shorten the span allotted them to prepare for e
Well might the Psalmist then say, "rivers o
"run down mine eyes, because men keep not th
—But, O ye giddy sons and daughters of
what will you think of your present pursuits,
death shall summon you to God's tribunal?
will then your riches, pleasures, decorations,
ces, honours, or dignities avail you? What c
will the knowledge of all languages, and art
sciences then afford? What will you think of yo
sent anxious cares, covetings, envyings, repi
and disputes; when the "night cometh in wh
"man can work?" "Seek," then, "the Lord
"he may be found, call upon him while he i
"let the wicked forsake his way and the unrig
"man his thoughts; and let him return to the
"and he will have mercy upon him; and to our
"for he will abundantly pardon."

ESSAY VI.

On the Deity of Jesus Christ.

THE doctrine of a Mediator, through whom a just and holy God deals mercifully with believers, is the grand peculiarity of revelation: it must therefore be of the greatest importance for us, to form a proper estimate of the personal dignity of this Mediator. The doctrine, which I shall here attempt to establish from Scripture, may be thus stated: 'That Jesus Christ is truly and really God, one with and equal to the Father; being from eternity possessed of all divine perfections, and justly entitled to all divine honours; yet personally distinct from the Father, and so called his own Son, and his only begotten Son. But that in order to the performance of his mediatorial offices, he assumed our nature into personal union with the Deity: and became One with us, truly Man, like us in all things, sin alone excepted: and that he is thus God and Man in one mysterious incomprehensible Person; so that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily."

No argument can properly be brought against the doctrine of *our Lord's essential Deity*, as here stated

from those Scriptures which speak of his human n ture, his mediatorial office, or his inferiority to t Father in both these respects: for our doctrine impli this, and even absolutely requires it. We need n therefore insist on this part of the subject: it is gen rally allowed by all, except deists and atheists, th "Christ is come in the flesh:" though numbers con tend that he could not have come in any other way and others deem him a mere creature, though of a su pra-angelick nature, and maintain that he is called Go only in consequence of his mediatorial exaltation. B the idea of a *creature* however exalted, *being adv ced to divinity*, is so repugnant to all rational pri ples, as well as to the declarations of Jehovah, that "knows no God besides himself, and will not g "his glory to another," that it will not be neces to discuss the subject before us, with any particul reference to these distinct opinions. It will fully a swer the purpose, if we can evince that our Redee er is by nature "GOD over all, blessed for evermore. At present I shall adduce a few select arguments direct proof of this point; leaving some other thing that belong to the subject, to be considered in t next Essay.

I. The reader will naturally turn his thoughts those Scriptures, in which Jesus Christ is expres called GOD, and LORD. "Without controversy says the apostle, "great is the mystery of godlines "GOD was manifest in the flesh."* He allows th the doctrine which he advanced was very mysterio

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

and that this could not be controverted or denied; but he seems to glory in it on that very account, because he considered it as THE GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS. We may therefore be sure, that they, who would so interpret the words as to render his doctrine scarcely mysterious at all, do not understand them: but all who suppose him to mean that Jesus was Emmanuel, GOD WITH US; that the child born at Bethlehem was THE MIGHTY GOD, as the prophet foretold:* consider this proposition both as a great mystery, and as the source, centre, and support of godliness.—It would be superfluous, in this brief attempt, to do more than refer the reader to the well known passages which are commonly brought forward in this argument;† and to intreat him to read them with attention, as the word of God, and with earnest prayer to be enabled to understand and believe them: for it seems impossible for human language to express any sentiment more strongly than they express the Deity of Christ. He "who was in the beginning with God, "and was GOD; who made all things," so that "without him was not any thing made that was made;" "*by whom*, and *for whom*, all things were created, "and *by whom* all things consist," and who "upholds "all things by the word of his power" must be "GOD "over all, blessed for evermore:" for "he that made "all things is GOD;" which surely none but an avowed atheist will deny.

These and several other passages of the same kind,

* Is. vii. 14. ix. 6.

† John i. 1—18. Phil. ii. 5—8. Col. i. 15—17. Heb. i.

will come again under consideration, towards the close of this Essay: and this first argument may be concluded by intreating the reader to consider what the apostle could mean by saying, "The second man is "the LORD from heaven,"* if Christ be a mere man, or a created being.

II. Several texts of the Old Testament concerning Jehovah are applied in the New to Christ. The prophet Joel declares, that "whosoever shall call on the "name of Jehovah shall be delivered:" and the apostle Paul expressly refers this to Christ:† for he adds "how shall they call on him of whom they have not "heard? or how shall they hear without a preacher?" It is manifest, that Joel predicted the judgments, which awaited the Jews for rejecting the Messiah:‡ but certainly they did very earnestly call upon Jehovah, the God of their fathers, to deliver them from the power of the Romans; yet they were not delivered, because they would not join with those who called on the name of Jesus; and they only who called on *him* were saved. As therefore "the Scripture cannot be "broken," Christ must be JEHOVAH; Paul considered him as such, and the event demonstrated him to be so.—The Psalmist says, "*Taste* and see, that Je-"hovah is good;" and to this the apostle manifestly refers, when he uses these words, "If so be, ye have "*tasted* that the Lord is gracious—to whom coming "as to a *living Stone*, &c;" and in what follows, the

* 1 Cor. xv. 47. † Joel ii. 32. Rom. x. 13—16.
‡ Acts ii. 16—21.

attentive reader will perceive, that he applies to Christ in the most unreserved manner, what the Prophet had spoken of "Jehovah, God of Hosts himself."* —The Evangelist, mentioning a most extraordinary vision of Jehovah in his temple, with which Isaiah was favoured, declares that the prophet "then saw the glory "of Christ, and spake of him."†—Paul applies to Christ's coming to judgment, what the same prophet had written of Jehovah swearing by himself, that "every knee should bow down to him, and every "tongue should confess to GOD."‡ Indeed the whole passage referred to, especially the last verse, "In "JEHOVAH shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and "shall glory," proves that Emmanuel was especially meant, in whom alone believers are justified and glory.§

Instances of this kind might be easily multiplied, did not brevity forbid: but I would rest the argument principally on those which follow. Jehovah, speaking to Moses, declared his self-existent, immutable, and eternal Deity, by saying I AM THAT I AM; and ordered him to inform Israel, "that I AM had sent him "to them:" this, Christ expressly applied to himself when he said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I "AM."‖ Had he said, 'before Abraham was, I *was*,' it would sufficiently have proved his pre-existence, as far as men believe him to be the Truth, or to speak truth: but we cannot affix any meaning to the words

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* Ps. xxxiv. 8. Is. viii. 13—15. xxviii. 16. 1 Pet. ii. 3—8.
† Is. vi. John xii. 39—41.
‡ Is. xlv. 21—25. Rom. xiv. 9—12. § 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.
‖ *Exod. iii. 14. John viii. 58.*

as they now stand, unless we allow him to be the eternal God. This his enemies of old clearly perceived, and therefore they went about to stone him for blasphemy: nor can they who deem him only a man fairly dissent from this determination, however it may be convenient to them to palliate the language which he employed. Should we render the words "I AM HE;" they are then equivalent to those of Jehovah, "Before "the day *was* I AM HE;"* and the use of the *present tense*, with reference to Abraham who lived so many ages before, perfectly discriminates this passage from all others, in which the same expression is used either by our Lord or by any other person. Indeed the language of the passage in Exodus, and that of Luke concerning it,† leads us to consider the eternal Son, the great Angel of the covenant, as the Speaker on this occasion: and whoever attentively compares the appearances of Jehovah to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, and many others, with the words of the Evangelist, "No man hath seen GOD at any time, "the only begotten Son—hath declared him;" will be apt to conclude that all these were discoveries of that very person in *the form of God*, who afterwards appeared in *the form of a servant*.

Again Isaiah introduces Jehovah saying, "I am the "First and I am the Last, and besides me there is no "God." This, Christ, appearing in vision to John, expressly and repeatedly claimed to himself.‡ "Fear

* Is. xliii. 13.

† Acts vii. 30—37.

‡ Is. xliv. 6. Rev. i. 8, 11, 17, 18. ii. 8. xxii. 13.

"and was GOD," that what belonged to the one nature might properly be said of the other? Thus it is said that "GOD purchased the church with *his own* "blood;" because he, who shed his blood, was GOD as well as man. In like manner "the Son of man was "in heaven," because that Person, whose omnipresence filled the heavens, was also the Son of man: and this was doubtless a specimen of those *heavenly things*, which are far more mysterious than regeneration.

The same conclusions may undeniably be drawn from our Lord's words, when he says, "Where "two or three are gathered together in my Name there "*am I* in the midst of you;" and, "Lo, *I am* with "you always, even to the end of the world."* These are certainly equivalent to the promises of Jehovah in the Old Testament, that he would be with his people in all their trials; and can by no ingenuity be separated from the attribute of omnipresence: for Christ, as Man, is in heaven, and not personally present with his ministers and congregations.—"No one," says he, "knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; neither "knoweth any one who the Father is, save the Son, "and he to whom the Son will reveal him."† Can any one deny this to be an assertion, that the Son is equally incomprehensible with the Father, and a declaration that all knowledge of God is erroneous, which is not learned by faith in Christ?

When he was called to account (probably before the sanhedrim,) for healing on the sabbath-day;‡ he

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* Matt. xviii. 20. xxviii. 20. † Matt. xi. 27. Luke x. 22.
‡ John v.

answered, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" and the Jews considered this as a declaration, that, "God was his *own* (ἴδιον) Father," and as "making "himself equal with God." His subsequent discourse, in which he stated his union of counsel and operation with the Father, and often referred to his human nature and mediatorial undertaking, has been frequently misunderstood: but surely He who spoke of "quick- "ening whom he would," of "having life in himself," and of being "honoured by all men, even as they ho- "noured the Father that sent him," cannot be thought to have objected to the inference, which the Jews had drawn from his first assertion.—In like manner, when he had said, "I and my Father are One," one Being or Deity, (θεῖον *numen*,) and the Jews in consequence charged him with blasphemy, "because being a man "he made himself God;" his answer, which concludes thus, "that ye may know and believe, that I am in "the Father, and the Father in me," could not be intended as a denial of their allegation; though we should allow that he waved the further discussion of the subject, by referring to the language of Scripture, concerning magistrates as types of the Messiah. The Jews at least did not understand it as such, for they renewed their attempts to seize and stone him as a blasphemer.*

It would not consist with brevity to consider particularly our Lord's words to Martha, "I am the "Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, "though he were dead yet shall he live; and whoso-

* John x. 27—39.

"ever believeth in me shall never die;" his reply to Philip, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;" "I am in the Father, and the Father in me;" with other expressions of his last discourse with his disciples; "They have both seen and hated both me and "my Father;" "All things that the Father hath are "mine;" "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with "the glory which I had with thee before the world "was;" "All mine," (in the *neuter gender*, implying *all things*, as well as *all persons*,) "are thine, and "thine are mine," and many others of similar import.* If Christ be no more than a man, or a created being, such language can only serve to perplex a plain subject, and mislead a simple reader: for it is evident, that much learning, ingenuity, and labour are required to put any plausible sense upon it, when his Deity is denied.

But our Lord's repeated promises of sending the "Holy Spirit, to convince the world concerning sin, "and righteousness, and judgment;" to "glorify "him," and "to teach, and comfort his disciples," require a more particular consideration. Without anticipating the subject of a future Essay, on the Deity and Personality of the Holy Spirit, we may assert without hesitation, that such promises could not properly have been given by any mere servant of God. The Holy Spirit must denote either a divine Person, or the one living and true God operating in a peculiar manner on the minds of men: and is it not palpably

* John xi. 25. xiv. 7—11. xvi. 15. xvii. 5—10.

absurd to suppose, that any mere creature should direct, or send, the Spirit of God, in either of these senses?—The Believer's union with Christ, and with the Father through him, has sometimes been considered as coincident with our Lord's union with the Father:* but can it be thought, that any Christian is one with God in such a sense, that the Holy Spirit may as properly be called his Spirit, as the Spirit of God? Yet he is frequently called the Spirit of Christ, as sent by and proceeding from him.† Indeed the words of Christ, by which the promise of the Spirit is introduced, are very remarkable; "Whatsoever ye "ask in my name, *I will do it.*"‡

The language of his disciples should also be noticed. They repeatedly observe, "that he knew the thoughts "of men:" and the apostle John expressly says, that "he knew all men; and needed not that any should "testify [illegible] for he knew *what was in man.*"§ If it be possible for any man to doubt whether this be an undeniable ascription of omniscience to our Saviour; yet Peter certainly appealed to that divine attribute without any reserve, when he said, "Lord, *thou know-* "*est all things*, thou knowest that I love thee "‖ The attentive reader of the Evangelists will observe for himself many expressions of a similar nature, which are never used by prophets, apostles, or angels, con-

* John xiv. 20. xvii. 21, 22.

† John xv. 26. xvi 7, 13—15. Rom. viii. 9—11.

‡ John xiv. 13—18.

§ John ii. 24, 25. 2 Chron. vi. 30. Jer. xvii. 9, 10.

‖ John xxi. 17.

cerning themselves or each other: and these show us what the disciples thought of their Lord. Thus John remarks, that by his miracles "he manifested forth "his glory:" whereas all the prophets and saints referred all their works to the glory of God alone.*

The testimony of John the Baptist is peculiarly important in this enquiry. "He was filled with the Holy "Ghost from his mother's womb;" being "more "than a prophet," and "great in the sight of the Lord "above all that had been born of woman."† Yet he counted himself "unworthy to loose the Redeem-"er's shoe-latchet:" and he declared, that "of his ful-"ness" he and all his fellow servants "had received;" that "he needed to be baptized of him," and that "Christ came from heaven and was above all." And though Jesus was the younger man, yet John assigned as the reason why he was preferred before him, "that "he *was* before him," which is absolutely decisive in respect of his pre-existence.‡ To such a degree did this most excellent servant of God abase himself, and exalt the Saviour! and in this *he* was a perfect contrast to those, who manifestly exalt themselves and degrade him.—The words of Gabriel to Zacharias concerning John are also very remarkable; "Many "of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord "their God; and he shall go before him," (even before the Lord their God,) "in the spirit and power "of Elias." John was the forerunner of Christ, and

* John ii. 11. † Luke i. 15. vii. 26—28.
‡ Matt. iii. 11—14. John i. 15, 16. iii. 27—36.

was sent to prepare his way before him: who then can doubt, but that the angel considered the Messiah, who was then about to appear as Emmanuel? as the Lord God of Israel? This the prophets had foretold; and one of them says, "The Lord whom ye seek "shall suddenly come *to his temple*, even the Messen-"ger," or *Angel* "of the Covenant."* We find JEHOVAH OF HOSTS repeatedly saying to another prophet, "Thou shalt know that JEHOVAH OF HOSTS "hath sent me to thee."† And when "the Word be-"came flesh, and dwelt among men," all his true disciples "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only "begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."‡

IV. The works which Christ hath undertaken, or performed, evince his Deity. He, "who created all "things, and upholds them by the word of his pow-"er," "came a Light into the world," "to be the Light "of the world," and to "enlighten every man that "cometh into the world."‖ That eternal Life, which was with the Father, was manifested to be the life of men.§ He has engaged to give eternal life to all his true disciples, notwithstanding the opposition of their enemies; to prepare mansions in heaven for them; to receive them to himself; to raise the dead by his word; to judge the whole world; and to destroy all his adversaries "with everlasting destruction, from his pre-"sence, and from the glory of his power;" by which

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* Luke i. 16. 17. Is. xl. 3, 4, 9—12. Mal. iii. 1.
† Zech. ii. 8—11. vi. 12—15. xiii. 7. ‡ John i. 14.
‖ John i, 3—9. viii. 12. xii. 46. § 1 John i. 1—3.

s able even to subdue all things unto himself:"*
n any thing except omnipotence and omniscience
these engagements?—The apostle speaks of
ians, as "looking for the glorious appearing of
great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ:"†
ıe great God will not appear at the day of judg-
in his Essence, (for "no man hath seen or can
him;" but Christ will appear, as the great GOD,
ıviour and Judge, in his own glory as Mediator,
ı the glory of the Father; exercising all divine
tions with sovereign authority before the whole
. Indeed his language respecting that decisive
ı is uniformly majestick beyond expression, as
attentive reader must perceive.—He is likewise
lted to *give repentance;*" he is "the Author and
isher *of faith;*" and even when he was "in the
n of a servant;" he had power on earth "to for-
: sins." "He has the keys of death and the invisi-
world:" "Angels, principalities, and powers are
ject to him;" nay, they are "the angels of his
ver;" and "all creatures serve him."—Who
s this "Son of David?" Is he not "the Son of
d?" Is he not the *Root*, as well as the *Offspring*,
vid? who, for that reason, "in Spirit called him
Lord," many ages before he became his son:
: is "the Lord of all," "the Lord of glory,"
the Prince of life."

nust evidently be absurd to ascribe all this to a
:d and delegated power; for how can omnipo-
omniscience, or omnipresence be communica-

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2 Thess. i. 7—10. Phil. iii. 21. † Tit. ii. 13.

ted, or exercised by a mere creature? Indeed Jeho
expressly declares, that "He made all things *by h*
"*self;*" and "will not give his glory to another;"
that "there is no God and Saviour besides him."*
The manner likewise in which Christ wrought
miracles, in general without the least appearance of
lying on any power but his own, was very differ
from that of prophets or apostles: for while *they* t
great care to have it understood, that they were m
ly the instruments of him in whose name they sp
lest the honour should be ascribed to them; *he* aut
ritatively issued his mandates in his own name, ac
evidently by his own power, and manifested forth
own glory.†

V. This appears still more conclusively in the l
haviour of our Lord towards those who honou
him. The servants of God have always decidedly
fused every kind and degree of honour shown to the
which seemed in the least to interfere with the gl
of God. The Scriptures referred to,‡ must put t
beyond all doubt. Yet it is obvious, that Jesus d
not object to similar honours; nay, that he most "ho
"oured those," who thus "honoured him;"§ and
proved of men in exact proportion, as they had hi
thoughts of him, and large expectations from hi
Nor is there a single exception to this rule in
whole history; for his answer to the young ruler, w

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* Is. xliii. 10. 11. xliv. 8, 24. † John ii. 11.
‡ Gen. xli. 16. Dan. ii. 28—30. Acts iii. 12, 13. x. 25,
xiv. 14, 55. Rev, xix. 10. xxii. 9.
§ 1 Sam. ii. 30.

lled him "good teacher," was in fact an intimation at he did not think highly enough of him, and mis-plied the epithet *good*, in giving it to one whom he emed a mere man like himself.—When the centu-on compared our Lord's power over all diseases, en in such persons as were at a distance, to his own thority over his soldiers and servants; Christ highly mmended the greatness of his faith.* When the af-icted parent besought him "to help his unbelief;" d when the disciples desired him to "increase their faith;" no intimation was given that their language s improper: but who can believe that apostles would ve approved of such requests being made to them?† e received without reserve that prostration, or wor-ip, against which prophets, apostles, and angels re-olutely protested when offered to them:‡ and, when rious opinions were formed of him, he always coun-nanced those which attributed the highest dignity to m, and even suggested still more exalted apprehen-ons of his glory.§ Now how can we account for this? lust we not conclude, either that the servants were ore humble, and more jealous for the glory of God, an his beloved Son; or that Christ was conscious, at "all men ought to honour him, even as they ho-noured the Father?" for it is manifest that he readi-accepted of those honours, which they most strenu-sly rejected.

VI. The undeniable instances of divine worship

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* Matt. viii. 8—10. † Mark ix. 24. Luke xvii. 5.
‡ Matt. viii. 2. xv. 25. Luke xvii. 16. John ix. 35—38.
§ Matt. xvi. 13—19. John xi. 22—27.

paid to Christ constitute another most conclusiv
gument. Worship, properly so called. is an ascri
to any Being, of the peculiar honour of the D
To supplicate a creature, though *visibly presen*
those blessings which God alone can bestow, is i
try; because it ascribes *omnipotence* to that crea
It is the same to pray to any being, when not sen
present, even for such deliverances as a creature n
afford: because it ascribes to that creature *omn*
sence, or omniscience; which proves all the praye
Papists to saints and angels to be idolatry. The
tions before mentioned, for "increase of faith,"
acts of worship paid to Christ: as was the addre
Thomas, "My Lord, and my God!" nor would
holy man or angel have received them. The for
baptism, "in the name of the Father, and of the
"and of the Holy Ghost," must be considered
appointed adoration of the Son and Holy S
equally with the Father; or we must admit the g
est absurdities. No doubt, Stephen worshipped C
when he prayed to him to "receive his spirit,"
not to impute his death to his murderers: or on
lar grounds we might deny Christ's own praye
the same effect, when he hung on the cross, to
adoration of the Father.*—What candid perso
deny, that Paul addressed Christ concerning
"thorn in the flesh?" for when the Lord answ
that "his grace was sufficient for him," he
"gloried in his infirmities, that the power of C

* Luke xxiii. 34, 46. Acts vii. 59, 60.

'might rest upon him."*—Did he not pray to Christ when he said, "Now God himself and our Father, "and the Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto "you?" And, "now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, "and God even our Father, comfort your hearts, "and stablish you in every good word and work?"† Such instances show how familiar it was to the apostle "to honour the Son, even as he honoured the Fa-"ther;" and to consider this as tending to the "glory "of God the Father."‡—The apostolical blessing is an act of worship resembling that appointed by Moses;‖ yet Christ and the Holy Spirit are joined in it: and doubtless he was prayed to, whenever "grace "and peace" (the sum of all spiritual blessings) were sought "from God our Father, and from our Lord "Jesus Christ." Indeed it was the grand peculiarity of Christians, that "they called on the name of the "Lord Jesus;"§ and those who have attempted to interpret such expressions in some other sense, do as little credit to their critical talents as to their orthodoxy. Not to multiply instances, to which some possible objection might be made; the words of Peter¶ are incapable of any other construction, than that which makes them an act of divine adoration to Christ, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord "and Saviour Jesus Christ: to him be glory both now "and for ever. Amen."

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* 2 Cor. xii. 7—10.
† 1 Thess. iii. 11—13. 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.
‡ Phil. ii. 11. ‖ Numb. vi. 24—27. 2 Cor. xiii. 14.
§ Acts ix. 14, 21. 1 Cor. i. 2. ¶ 2 Pet. iii. 18.

As all the angels of God were commanded to worship his incarnate Son; so, when a door was opened in heaven, the whole angelick host is introduced as joining the company of redeemed sinners, in ascribing eternal honour and praise to "the Lamb that was "slain," in union with "Him that sitteth on the "throne:"* and no words can possibly be more emphatical than those used on these occasions. Can any man, then, after reading them, assert, that Christ is a mere created Being? or that it is idolatry to worship him? Or will he pretend to believe the Revelation of John to be the unerring word of God? or can he disprove its divine inspiration; when its prophecies have been so remarkably accomplished?—This shows that our version is faithful in another place,† and that every Christain ought to join the saints of old, in saying, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our "sins in his own blood,—be glory and dominion for "ever and ever. Amen."

VII. Lastly, our doctrine is confirmed by the absurdities, into which its most able opposers have been driven. Such men have principally laboured to invalidate those texts, which seem most explicit on the subject: though we could prove our doctrine even if these evidences were set aside. I have therefore declined adducing one testimony in the Epistle of John, (which is decisive, if genuine, as upon the whole I suppose it to be;) because its authenticity has been so much disputed.‡ A short specimen, however, may

* Rev. v. vii. † Rev. i. 5, 6. ‡ 1 John v. 7, 8.

show with what success they who deny the Deity of Christ have laboured. The Psalmist, and from him the apostle, says of the Messiah, "Thy throne, O "God, is for ever and ever."* To elude the obvious inference from this text, it has been said, that the words may be rendered, "God is thy throne for ever "and ever." We read that heaven is God's throne, and the earth is his footstool; but who can conceive God himself to be the throne, on which a creature should reign to eternity?—Instead of "God was mani- "fest in the flesh;"† some would read it, "*who* was "manifested in the flesh;" in which case *God* must be the antecedent, as the context shows; and then the sense remains precisely the same. Others would read it, "*which* (*mystery*) was manifested in the flesh;" and then the mystery must be that to which all the subsequent clauses in the verse refer; and, whatever may be thought of the other propositions, "which "mystery was received up into glory," will scarcely be deemed the language of inspiration, by any who do not prefer nonsense to orthodoxy. But sometimes these persons seem disposed to retain our reading, and to explain the expression to mean, 'that the wis- 'dom and power of God were conspicuous in Christ;' which would be also true of Peter, or Moses; and so this "great mystery of godliness" at length is found to be no mystery at all!

When incredulous Thomas was at last convinced of Christ's resurrection, he exclaimad, "My Lord, "and my God!" And it cannot seem wonderful to

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* Ps. xlv. 6, 7. Heb. i. 8, 9. † 1 Tim. iii, 15, 16.

those, who consider that he knew the Messiah was to be called Emmanuel, and had heard him say, "He "that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" that he should be convinced of his Deity by his resurrection from the dead.* To set aside this testimony, it has been said, that the apostle's words were the language of astonishment, and not of adoration; as men often exclaim, *my God!* when greatly surprised. But are not such exclamations manifest violations of the third commandment, and certain proofs of irreverent contempt of the name of God? Who then can believe, that the apostles used such profane language before Christ, without meeting the least reproof for it?† Surely such a solution must be improbable in the highest degree; and they, who can admit it, have no right to despise other men's credulity. But indeed, the words cannot admit of any such construction, consistently with the idium of the original language.

That most august passage, with which John opens his gospel, has been so construed, in order to evade our inference from it, that the nominative case to the verbs used in it must be changed again and again, without the least intimation given of it; contrary to all the rules of grammar. By others, *the Word* is supposed to mean nothing more, than the energy or power of God, which was eternally with him and essential to him, by which he made the world, and which was manifested in the man Jesus: but can any one in his senses suppose, that this was all the meaning of the apostle's introduction to his gospel, of the sub-

* John xx. 26—31. Rom. i. 2, 3. † Matt. v. 37.

lime things he says of the WORD, and of his "becom-"ing flesh and dwelling among us?" If any one should think so for a moment, a second attentive perusal must surely convince him of his mistake. Aware of this, it is now deemed convenient to set it aside as no part of revelation!

The interpretation, given of another decisive evidence,* is grounded on a proposed different translation, implying that 'Christ did not think of such a 'robbery, as that of being equal with God.' But not to mention the various expressions used by our Lord, which certainly were thus understood by the Jews; who can believe, that the apostle should propose to his brethren, as a *perfect example of humility*, the conduct of a mere man, or creature, who barely did not claim equality with the eternal God; when at best, this could be no more than an exemption from the very summit of all possible pride and ambition? His argument (as well as the meaning of the words,) proves that *in the form of God*, signifies, being truly GOD and appearing so; even as the *form of a servant*, and the *fashion of a man* signify being truly man: and how could a mere creature "*take upon him* the form "of a servant," seeing he must always have been a servant of his Maker?

The apostle speaking of the patriarchs,† said, "of "whom, *as concerning the flesh*, Christ came, who "is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." To evade this decisive testimony it has been proposed to render

* Phil. ii. 5—10. † Rom. ix. 5.

the latter clause, "God, *be* blessed for ever. Amen." But where then is the meaning of the preceding expression, "as concerning the flesh?" Did ever a sensible writer use such language in speaking of the descent of any prince or hero? Does not the energy and propriety of the passage depend on the contrast between the clauses "of whom as concerning the flesh "Christ came," and "who is over all God blessed for "ever?" And does not such a change in the version render the passage unmeaning, or absurd?

Stephen's dying address to Christ has lately been considered, 'as the words of a man, in an extacy of 'devotion, or in the agonies of death,' and therefore not of much weight in the arguments; as if modern reasoners could better direct our faith and worship than this protomartyr, when "full of the Holy Ghost," favoured with the visions of God, and replete with the light of Heaven!—"Ye know the grace of our Lord "Jesus Christ: that though *he was rich*, yet for your "sakes he *became poor*."* What shall we say to these words of Paul? Could he, who was born in a stable, had not where to lay his head, and died on a cross, be rich before he was poor; if he did not exist before he became man?—The words of Christ, which his disciples thought so plain, "I came forth from the Father, "and am come into the world; again I leave the world "and go to the Father,"† and many other declarations which he made, "that he came down from hea-"ven," so pressed the ancient Socinians, as to induce

* 2 Cor. viii. 9. † John xvi. 28.

ıem to feign that Jesus went to heaven to receive his ıstructions, previously to his entrance on his minis-ry, as Mahomet afterwards pretended that he did. But ıodern Socinians have given up this figment; they ıem conscious of their inability to maintain their old ground; and therefore they now intimate that apostles nd evangelists were mistaken, and that several books r parts of the scripture are not authentick, or not di-inely inspired. Thus they save themselves much rouble, by answering all our witnesses at once; and oubtless they act prudently in imitating the church f Rome; constituting themselves Judges of the Scrip-ıre, determining what parts of it are divine, and mak-g their own scheme the standard by which it is to e interpreted: for neither of these systems can be pported, but by disregard to the word of God, or egradation of it.

I feel a confidence, that each of the arguments here duced is separately conclusive: how great then must s their united force! Yet only a small part of the idence can be contained in so brief an Essay. I ould, therefore, conclude with observing that the criptures were written to recover men from idolatry the worship of the true God: and that idolatry con-sts in worshipping such as "*by nature* are no gods." What then shall we think of all the texts here adduced, Christ be not GOD? or what shall we say to John's nclusion of his first epistle, when, having mention-Jesus Christ, he adds, "This person (οὗτος) is the true GOD, and eternal Life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols?"*

* 1 John v. 20, 21.

ESSAY VII.

The doctrine of Christ's Deity shown to be essential to Christianity: and some objections to the doctrine briefly answered.

WE are not in all cases capable of determining exactly what things are essential to our holy religion, and what are not: yet the scriptures most evidently declares some porticulars to be so; and I cannot but consider the doctrine of our Lord's Deity as one of these essentials, nor do I hesitate to say that Christianity itself must stand or fall with it. The greater division is proper on this subject, as our opponents seem lately to have shifted their ground. They used to maintain, that 'Christ's divinity was the master-piece 'of absurdities;—directly contrary to every part of 'natural and revealed religion, and to all the rational 'faculties God has given us;' 'that by making more 'gods than one, it was a breach of the first command-'ment;' and much more to the same purpose. This was a direct charge of gross idolatry, which surely must be a mortal sin: and as the defenders of the doctrine denied, and even retorted, the charge, showing

that another god is substituted by Socinians in the place of the God of the Bible; the cause was fairly at issue, allowed to be of the greatest possible importance, and entitled to the most careful, serious, and impartial investigation. But at present men are generally put off their guard by the *plausible* and *indolent* sentiment, that speculative opinions are of little consequence; and that those, who are sincere and lead good lives, will not be condemned for doctrinal errors. And an attempt has lately been made, by a champion of the party,* to persuade a very large body of men, who universally profess the doctrine of Christ's Deity, that there is no essential difference between them and the Socinians! On the other hand, some able defenders of the doctrine seem disposed to allow, that, supposing it true, the belief of it is not necessary to salvation, or essential to Christianity; nay, that they who most strenuously oppose it, and not always in the most unexceptionable manner, may notwithstanding be accepted by God as sincere believers. Thus the subject, which used to be considered as of the utmost importance, is now generally thought to be rather a matter of doubtful disputation among christians, than immediately connected with our eternal interests: and the cause has more to fear from the indolent and contemptuous indifference of mankind, as to theological questions which are not supposed essential to salvation, than from the most strenuous and ingenious efforts of its very able and learned opponents.

* Dr. Priestley. Address to the Methodists in his preface to the Letters of the Wesleys.

I shall therefore endeavour, in this place, to show *that the doctrine of our Lord's Deity is essential to the faith and hope of a Christian;* and this will lead our attention to many arguments in proof of it, which were not produced in the former Essay.

I. There are several texts of Scripture which are decisive on the subject. Jesus Christ himself declares that "the Father hath committed all judgment to the "Son; and all men should honour the Son, even as "they honour the Father: He that honoureth not the "Son, *honoureth not the Father* that sent him."* If the very end of his mediatorial authority, as the Son of man, were this, "that all men should honour him" with the same kind and degree of honour that is shown to the Father, (and this must be the case if our doctrine be true,) then such persons, as deny his Deity; refuse to worship him; and spend their lives, with all their ability, influence, and diligence, to draw men off from this faith and worship; do not honour him at all, but greatly degrade him; and therefore by the verdict of their future Judge, they "do not honour "the Father that sent him." So that the doctrine of Christ's Deity, if true, must be essential to Christianity.

It appears from Scriptures already referred, to,† that they have no true knowledge of the Father, who do not receive it from the revelation made of him by the Son: but how can that man be thought to learn

* John v. 22, 23. † Matt. xi. 27. Luke x. 22.

the knowledge of the Father from the Son, who disregards his express declarations, that "He and the "Father are One," and that, "He that hath seen him "hath seen the Father?" If these words do indeed imply the Deity of the Son, as *One with the Father;* the knowledge of God, which they who deny his Deity possess, cannot accord to the revelation made by the Son, but must be entirely of another nature.—The apostle likewise expressly says,* "Whosoever "denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:" and can any man suppose this related only to a denial, that Jesus was the Messiah? If this were all that was meant, then none but avowed unbelievers were concerned in the warning: whereas it is evident, that the apostle spoke of those who *seduced*, not those who *opposed* his Christian brethren; and who, by denying Jesus to be the Son of God, drew them off from the true doctrine in that particular. As, therefore, they, "who "denied the Son, had not the Father;" the inference is unavoidable, that they, who deny the scriptural doctrine concerning the Son of God, whatever that doctrine be, have not the Father for their God and Portion. Many errors relate to different parts of the structure, the removal of which though ill spared, may not wholly subvert it: but this concerns the foundation, and is of fatal consequence: "for other founda-"tion can no man lay."†

The same apostle gives it as a rule, that the truth might be known, by its agreement with the doctrine delivered by him and his brethren; and that every

* 1 John ii. 22, 23. † 1 Cor. iii. 10—15.

tenet, however supported, must be a doctrine of Antichrist, which accorded not with what they had taught concerning Christ. "Hereby know ye the spirit of "God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ "is come in the flesh is of God. And every spirit that "confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh "is not of God—and this is that spirit of Antichrist. "—We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth "us; he that is not of God heareth not us—hereby "know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."* According to this rule, all pretences to new revelations, and every philosophical reasoning, must be wholly disregarded as "springing from the *spirit of error*," if they contradict the testimony of the apostles, as recorded in the Scriptures; and if this error relate to the Person of Christ, it is of Antichrist. It may be allowed, that "by coming in the flesh," the reality of our Lord's human nature was maintained: but who could have doubted, that he was *really a man*, if it had been generally believed that he was *no more than a man*? If he could not have come otherwise than *in the flesh*, the apostle would hardly have made that an essential part of his confession. But the coming of the only begotten Son of God in the flesh, as the anointed King, Priest, and Prophet of the church, was indeed essential to his doctrine; and they who denied it must reject or pervert all the rest. Yet, some of those hereticks, whom John here so strenuously opposed, as the forerunners of the principal Antichrist, were the very persons, whom certain modern Antitrinitarians would

* 1 John iv. 2—6.

persuade us to regard, as the only primitive Christians that retained the faith of the gospel in its original purity!

The apostle afterwards declares, that the principal testimony of God related to his Son: "If we receive 'the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. 'For this is the witness of God which he hath testi-'fied of his Son.—He that believeth not God, hath 'made him a liar, because he believeth not the re-'cord that God gave of his Son. And this is the re-'cord, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this 'life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, 'and *he that hath not the Son of God hath not 'life.*"* As the whole of revelation centres in this point, it is vain for a man to pretend that he believes other parts of it, whilst he rejects this principal doctrine. His *opinion* may indeed accord with the testimony of God in some particulars: he may assent to scriptural truths, because he thinks they may be *otherwise* proved; but if his own reasonings, or those of some philosopher, lead to conclusions opposite to the word of God, he hesitates not to treat that as a lie. So that in fact such men, when they assent to scriptural truths, do not believe God, but other witnesses: for they treat him as a false witness, when he contradicts their preconceived opinions. It is therefore evident, that no belief of the Bible, or of any thing contained in it, can be genuine, whilst "the testimony "which God hath given of his Son" is rejected. And this illustrates all those other passages, in which

* 1 John v. 10—13.

it is declared, that "he that believeth not shall be "damned;" and that "he who believeth not the Son "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on "him:" because it hence appears, that unbelievers treat *the truth of God as a lie;* and so exclude themselves from that salvation, which is in Christ Jesus for sinners who by faith apply for an interest in it. For it is plain that a man cannot believe the Son, if he refuse to credit what he says of himself, and concerning his personal dignity and excellency.

The same important caution is again inculcated by this apostle. "Many deceivers are entered into the "world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in "the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist.— "Whosoever transgresseth, and *abideth not in the* "*doctrine of* Christ, *hath not* God. He that abideth "in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father "and the Son."* *The doctrine of* Christ must certainly relate to his Person, either as God and Man, or merely Man. But if he that abode not in that doctrine had not God; and if Christians were forbidden to "receive him into their houses, or bid him God "speed," or at all to sanction his delusions; (though they might doubtless have relieved his urgent wants, as those of an enemy in distress;) it must follow, that the doctrine concerning the Person of Christ is essential to Christianity, and a rejection of the true doctrine is an antichristian departure from the faith. And I appeal to every impartial man to determine, whether such language, if *we* had first used it, would not have ex-

* 2 John 7—11.

l the sneer of numbers, and an outcry of bigotry
ıst us?—The reader must observe, that the texts,
quoted, are not brought as direct proofs of our
l's Deity, (though many of them do prove it,)
to show that *a right faith in this respect is essen-
to salvation by Christ:* and they doubtless so far
olish this point, that those, who treat such ques-
s as immaterial, will find it most convenient en-
r to overlook them, or to deny them to be the un-
g dictates of the Spirit of truth.

. The peculiar nature of our Lord's mediation
ants the same conclusion. The office of mediator,
een two parties who are at variance, seems to
y, that the person performing it stands in some
ion to each party; is likely to take care of the in-
ts of both in an equitable manner; and possesses
ence, either from excellency of character, dignity
nk, or services performed, to give weight to his
position. Now, Jesus is Mediator between the
: Creator and holy Governor of the universe, and
unholy rebellious creatures; and it is supposed,
there are those things, in his person, character,
rvices, for the sake of which the Father is pleased
rdon and bless all them in behalf of whom he
ates. But, not to anticipate the subject of a fu-
Essay, it suffices to observe at present, that if the
er saw it necessary for the display of his glory in
alvation of sinners, that the Mediator should be
manuel, his coequal Son in human nature, God
fest in the flesh; and that it was wholly improper
ny other person to sustain this office, or approach

him in this character, except "his beloved Son in "whom he is well pleased;" and if sinners pertinaciously reject his authenticated testimony to this divine Mediator, and will regard him as a mere man: they must exclude themselves from the benefit of this gracious constitution, and exceedingly affront both the Father and the Son. Can it indeed at all be supposed, that such men are taught by that Spirit, whose office it is to *glorify Christ*, when they thus studiously degrade him? yet "if any man have not the Spirit of "Christ, he is none of his." It will be shown in due time, that the mediation of Christ is the grand display of the divine glory, of the honour of the law, and of the evil of sin: and, in this view of it, the personal dignity of Christ, like the centre-stone of an arch, sustains the whole: take that away, and the whole must fall, either at once or by degrees. This reasoning is supported by well known and multiplied examples. They who deny the deity of Christ, next proceed to explain away the doctrine of the atonement. That of his intercession and priestly character is soon proportionably disregarded; the evil and desert of sin then seem to vanish from their view; and they have little fear of future punishment, but object to the plain language of Scripture on that subject. This makes way for doubts about the authenticity, or divine inspiration of the sacred oracles, and often terminates in rejecting them: and when such men are still pressed with difficulties from undeniable facts, they venture to deny the providence, and then the very being, of God. It is manifest, that this has been the unhappy progress of many: for when the Deity of Christ is denied, his

mediation cannot consistently be maintained; and when that is rejected, the Book, in which it is the principal object, must soon sink into insignificancy at least, and be treated with neglect.

III. The peculiar nature of the faith, love, and obedience, which the word of God expressly requires us to exercise towards the Lord Jesus, confirms the point in question. The prophet says,* "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord;" and the psalmist† cautions us in these words, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the *son of man*, in whom there is no help:" yet nothing can be plainer, than that we are required to *put our trust in Christ;* and if he were *only* the Son of man, and had only an arm of flesh, I cannot see how we could trust in him, without departing from the Lord."—The form of baptism, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," implies a professed dependence for salvation on the Son and on the Holy Ghost, and a devoted faithful attachment to them, as well as to the Father.—The expression, "believe *in* the Son of God," signifies not only an assent to his truths, but *a reliance* on him for all the blessings which he is exalted to bestow.—The apostle speaks of Christians, as those, "who trusted in Christ:" faith, or its inseparable effect, is commonly described by "coming to Christ,"‡ "receiving him," or "abiding in him;"

* Jer. xvii. 5, 6. † Ps. cxlvi. 3. ‡ Eph. i. 12.

and such expressions must imply application to him and habitual dependence on him, even now he is invisible to us, and not present in respect of his human nature.

We are commanded to "walk in him," which must include a constant reliance on his power, truth, and love, as well as a regard to his authority.* "He suffered being tempted, that he might be able to succour us when tempted:" † does not this teach us to apply to him and rely on him in our temptations? "I will," says he to his disciples, "give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, or resist:" ‡ ought they not, therefore, to rely on him to fulfil that promise? Can he be our Life, unless we depend on him for the life of our souls? § Does he forgive sins, and ought not the sinner to rely on him for pardon? Does he send the Holy Spirit, to teach, comfort, and sanctify his people; and ought we not to depend on him for that blessing? Has he "all power in heaven and earth:" and shall we do wrong to trust that power in all circumstances? Has he engaged to be with his assembled disciples; and should they not expect and depend on his gracious presence? ‖ In short the believer can do nothing of himself, and "can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth him:" "he has communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ:" ¶ and how

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* Col. ii. 6, 7. † Heb. ii. 17, 18. ‡ Luke xxi. 15.
§ Col. iii. 1—4. 13. ‖ Matt. xviii. 20. xxviii. 20. John xiv. 20—24. ¶ 1 John i. 3.

can these things be, unless he habitually relies on him and applies to him in all these respects? They, who do not trust in Christ, can receive no communications from him, nor maintain any intercourse with him; and it is no wonder, that they deride those as enthusiasts, who experience what *they* despise.—But if such a dependence on Christ be essential to faith, the doctrine of his Deity must be essential also: for can we *reasonably rely on a mere creature*, to forgive our sins, to sanctify our souls, to raise our bodies from the grave, and to give us eternal life? or can any one deny such a reliance to be idolatrous? To form these expectations from Christ, we must believe, that he is "God over all, blessed for ever more;" "the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever."*

In like manner the *love*, which Christ demands of us, cannot belong to any mere creature. We are required to love him more than our nearest relatives, or even than our own lives; nay, to *hate* all these, or (to act as if we hated them,) when they come in competition with our love to him; otherwise we are not worthy of him, and cannot be his disciples.† Now what is this but to love him entirely, and as we ought to love the Father? Yet we are never cautioned not to let our love of Christ interfere with "that love of God "with all our hearts," which the law requires: it is not once intimated, that there is any incongruity, disparity, or even distinction, between our love of the

* Rom. ix. 5. Heb. xiii. 8. Rev. i. 4. xi. 17.

† Matt. x. 37. Luke xiv. 26.

Father, and of the Son: nay, the more we love C the greater our love of the Father is supposed and the more shall we be loved of him.* The sions of the great day of account are represent awarded by this rule: they who have loved C and shown their love to him by kindness to his ples for his sake, will be considered as true bel and righteous persons; they, who shall be prove to have loved him, by their neglect of his poor ples, will be considered as unbelievers and impe sinners, and condemned to have their portion wi wicked.† But can we suppose, that no mention on this occasion be made of the love of God, love of Christ had been entirely distinct from it: it were not certain, that the more we love the the more we love the Father that sent him?

The apostle Paul, likewise solemnly blesses "that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; denounces an awful curse on every man who "not love the Lord Jesus Christ;"‡ and he repr the love of Christ, as the constraining principle his own devoted labours and services.§ An apostle speaks of the love of an unseen Saviour, universal experience of all Christians;‖ and whe apostle denied his Lord, he was thrice interro whether he loved him, before he was fully re-in in his pastoral office.¶ No such special and pre nent love towards any one of the mere serva

* John viii. 42. xiv. 21—24. xv. 23. † Matt. xxv. 3
‡ 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Eph. vi. 24. § 2 Cor. v. 14.
‖ 1 Pet. i. 8. ¶ John xxi. 15-

God is required of us: nay, the apostle was afraid lest he, or his brethren, should be put in Christ's place, when he enquired, "was Paul crucified for you? or 'were you baptized in the name of Paul?' * But our Lord never intimated, that there was any danger, lest his disciples should love him, in a degree that would be derogatory to the rights of God the Father.—The Lord is a jealous God, and cannot endure a rival in our affections, but demands our whole heart. How then can "Christ dwell in our hearts," as Lord of our affections, if he and the Father be not One? Seeing therefore we ought to love Christ, even as we love the Father; it must be necessary that we believe him to be the adequate object of that love: both for what he is in himself, and what he hath done for us: and thus the doctrine of his Deity, if true, must be essential; and, if so, how can we keep clear of the apostle's anathema, unless we believe it?

We are constantly reminded in the sacred Scriptures that we are "not our own, but the Lord's:" we are his property, because he made us: and, when by sin we had alienated ourselves, we became his again, as "bought with a price, to glorify him, in body and "spirit, which are his." † Yet the apostles always speak of believers, as *belonging to Christ;* they are *his servants, his purchased flock, his espoused bride,* (though the Lord of Hosts is called the Husband of the church,)‡ yea, *the members of his body.* Paul says, in one place, "I through the law am dead to the

* 1 Cor. i. 13. † 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. x. 31. ‡ Is. liv. 5.

"law, that I might live *unto God;*" in another, "the "we should live no longer to ourselves, but *to him who* "*died for us and rose again;*" and that "Christ died and "rose again, that he might be the Lord both of the living "and of the dead."* And he observes, that the Lord Jesus "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us "from all iniquity, and purify *unto himself* a peculiar "people, zealous of good works."† Could such language as this be properly used concerning services rendered to a mere man? Surely it would be an idolatrous alienation of ourselves from the service of our Maker, to devote ourselves to that of a fellow creature! But if Christ be truly God, One with the Father: then our dedication of ourselves to his service is the same as our devoted obedience to the Father that sent him; and is no other than the prescribed manner, in which as redeemed sinners we are required to render it.

In short, it must be evident to all, who revere the language of Scripture, and diligently investigate the subject, that we honour, obey and worship the Father, when we honour, obey, and worship the Son; and that all the glory rendered to the Son redounds to the glory of the Father, "who is glorified in the Son."‡ But indeed who can believe, that it should be the office of the Holy Spirit to "glorify Christ;" if it be of little or no consequence what men think of his person, or if proper views of it are not essential to Christianity? or that the apostle would *in that case* have

* Gal. ii. 19. 2 Cor. v. 15. Rom. xiv. 8, 9. † Tit. ii. 14.
‡ John xiii. 31. 32. xvii. 1, 10. Phil. i. 20. ii. 11.

spoken of his "name being glorified in and by his "saints, both now and at the day of judgment?"*

Finally, we are every where in Scripture required to glory and rejoice in the Lord; and not to glory and rejoice in ourselves, in worldly advantages, or in men. —Yet Paul characterizes Christians, as "rejoicing" or *glorying* "in Christ."† He says, "I protest by "your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus:"‡ he speaks to the Philippians§ of "their rejoicing being "more abundant in Christ-Jesus:" and he evidently applies the language of the prophets, as requiring men to "glory in Jehovah," to Jesus Christ, even while he cautioned his people not to glory in men.‖ In like manner Peter, speaking of the appearing of Jesus Christ, says to his brethren, "Whom having not seen "ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet "believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full "of glory."¶ And could this joy be any other, either in its nature or object, than that mentioned by the apostle Paul: "We rejoice in the hope of the glory "of God:" "and not only so, but we also joy in "God?"** On the supposition that Jesus is a mere creature, Jehovah would give his glory to another if he inspired his servants to use such language: so that the confidence, love, gratitude, devotedness of heart, and honour, which the Scriptures require us to render to Christ, must be impracticable, unless we have a proper judgment of his dignity and excellency; and

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* 2 Thess. i. 10—12. † Phil. iii. 3. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 31.
§ Phil. i. 26.
‖ Is. xlv. 24, 25. Jer. ix. 23, 24. 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. iii. 21.
¶ 1 Pet. i. 8. ** Rom. v. 2, 11.

we must either rob him of the glory due to his name, or give Jehovah's glory to another, if we mistake in this fundamental matter.

IV. The nature of heavenly felicity confirms this reasoning. The language of the apostle is emphatical, "To depart hence, and to be with Christ, which is "far better;" for this implies that the presence of Christ, the discoveries of his glory, and the enjoyment of his love, constitute the happiness for which he longed:* and in what does this differ from the beatifick vision?—But in the last chapters of the Revelation of St. John, which describe the heavenly state, this is still more plainly declared. He, whose name is "Alpha and Omega," says, "I will give him that is "athirst of the water of life freely. He that over-"cometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his "God, and he shall be my son."† If any person should explain this passage of the Father, it would only prove, that "the Father and Son are One;" for the Son is doubtless called Alpha and Omega.‡ Again, the apostle "saw no temple" in the new Jerusalem; "for the Lord God Almighty, and *the Lamb* are the "Temple of it: and the city had no need of the sun, "neither of the moon; for the glory of God did light-"en it, and *the Lamb was the light thereof.*"§ He next saw a "pure river of water of life,—proceeding "out of the throne of God, and *of the Lamb:*"—"and there shall be no more curse, but the throne of

* Phil. i. 23. John xvii. 24.
† Rev. xxi. 6, 7.
‡ Rev. i. 10—20.
§ Rev. xxi. 22, 23.

"God, and *of the Lamb* shall be in it, and his ser-
"vants shall serve him; and they shall see his face,
"and his name shall be in their foreheads."* Can any thing be plainer, than that the writer of this book believed the Son to be One with and equal to the Father; the Fountain of light, life, purity, and felicity; in whose "presence is fulness of joy, and pleasures at "his right hand for evermore?"

The worship of heaven likewise is represented, as a constant ascription of praise and honour to Christ together with the Father:† so that we cannot sing on earth the very words of the heavenly choir, with apparent fervour and unreserved approbation, without danger of being deemed enthusiasts; as it is manifest from the care taken by many persons to expunge every expression of this kind from their books of psalms and hymns for publick worship, as well as from their other services. Will there then be discordant companies of worshippers in heaven? Or, if all must be harmonious, are we never to learn the song of the redeemed, till we come to heaven? Or how can we learn this song, if we never come to a settled determination in our minds, whether the Lamb that was slain be worthy of all worship and honour, or not? or if it be indifferent, whether we adore him and expect felicity from him, as God; or only respect his memory, as a good man?

V. Lastly, the language of authority, which we

* Rev. xxii. 1—5. † Rev. vii. 9, 10.

are assured our future Judge will use at the last
should not pass unnoticed in this argument. A
happiness of heaven is represented under the id
"entering into his joy," and "beholding his glor
so the misery of the wicked is spoken of, as a ba
ment from *his presence*, and the endurance o
wrath. He will not say "Depart from God,"
"Depart from me:"† and in a figurative descri
of the great consternation of his enemies, in whi
an evident reference to the day of judgment, the
introduced as calling on the rocks and mountains
"hide them from the wrath of the Lamb; for th
"of his great wrath is come, and who is able to
"it?"‡ If then, 'we believe that he shall come
'our Judge,' it must be of the greatest import
that we know who he is by whom our eternal st
to be decided. For surely it will be very dreadf
those to meet him arrayed in glorious majesty,
during their whole lives, refused him the hono
demanded, treated his declarations of his personal
nity as false or unmeaning, and continually ut
hard speeches against him!§ The season of his
ing will be emphatically "the day of God;"‖ a
behoves every one of us to "prepare to meet
"God," that we "may be found of him in p
"without spot and blameless."

But to all these scriptural demonstrations o
truth and importance of this essential doctrine, s

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* Matt. xxv. 21. John xvii. 24.
† Matt. xxv. 41. 2 Thess. i. 9, 10. ‡ Rev. vi. 16, 1
§ Jude 14, 15. Rev. i. 7. ‖ 2 Pet. iii. 12—

objections are opposed, which are considered as insurmountable. A few of these shall here be very briefly noticed.—It is objected, that the Deity of Christ is inconsistent with the unity of God; or that it is irrational, unintelligible, and contradictory. But doubtless something more than confident assertion is requisite to prove the doctrine of the Trinity to be inconsistent with the divine Unity. The apostle speaks of the body, soul, and spirit, as constituting the same individual man; (though some perhaps may object to his language.) If then a man may be *three* in one respect, and *one* in another; do we know so much of God, as to assert it is impossible that somewhat similar, but far superior, and more entire both in the distinction and in the unity, should take place in his incomprehensible nature? And ought not men to speak more reverently and cautiously on a subject, about which we know nothing more than what God himself has taught us; especially as a great deal is spoken of in Scripture, which so strongly appears to have this meaning, that the bulk of Christians in every age have thus understood it? We do not say, that the Deity is Three and One, in the same sense; nor do we pretend to explain or comprehend how God subsists in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: but we should humbly believe his testimony concerning himself, and adore his incomprehensible majesty.

One would scarcely have expected, that this doctrine should have been objected to because it is *mysterious;* when the apostle expressly calls it *the* GREAT MYSTERY OF GODLINESS! But indeed, till we can comprehend ourselves, it is absurd to object to mys-

teries in those things which relate to the infinite God. The power of mind over matter is mysterious in the highest degree; yet we must deny our own existence, as well as that of God, if we do not admit it; for our will moves our tongues and limbs continually, yet we know not how. Mysteries, which philosophy can never explain, are found in the production of every plant and animal. The style of God in all his works is mystery; and shall we suppose that his own nature is not above all mysterious? Experiment is indeed the proper standard of our discoveries of the powers of nature: but in our enquiries concerning the Creator and his incomprehensible essence, we must be satisfied with his testimony. Beyond this we cannot go: here we can make no experiment: nay, the subject baffles all our investigation. For "can we by searching find "out God? can we find out the Almighty to perfec- "tion?"—If men object the inferiority of Christ to the Father, as Man and Mediator; or his "growth in "wisdom and stature;" we answer that those passages, which ascribe omniscience and other divine perfections to him, demonstrate that he had *another nature*, in union with that *true humanity* of which such things are spoken. And "his delivering up the king- "dom to God, even the Father,"* which has sometimes been objected to the doctrine of his Deity, only establishes the distinction between the absolute and everlasting kingdom of God, as Creator; and the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, as the Divine Saviour of sinners. The absolute kingdom existed before sin

* 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

d, and will exist for ever, after the mediatorial
om shall have answered its grand design, and shall
:ome to an end: but the Son will be one with the
r to eternity, as he was in the beginning, before
vas, or creation had taken place.

ıny person should be convinced, by these plain
ıents, of the truth and importance of this doc-
I would conclude with warning him not to *rest*
notion of it: but to apply it practically, by rely-
ı Emmanuel for all things belonging to salvation,
y rendering him that love, and honour, and wor-
and obedience, which are due to his Name.
ruth held in unrighteousness can only increase
ı's condemnation; but they who deem it the life
ir souls should endeavour to adorn it, and pro-
the knowledge of it by all suitable means; re-
ering that "the servant of the Lord must not
ve, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient,
meekness instructing those that oppose them-
ves; if God peradventure will give them repen-
ce to the acknowledging of the truth; and that
y may recover themselves out of the snare of
Devil, who are taken captive by him at his
l."*

* 2 Tim. ii. 24—26.

ESSAY VIII.

On the nature and design of the Mediatorial Office, sustained by the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE mediation of Christ, between a holy God and sinful men, has an immediate connexion with every part of that religion which bears his name: and all who call themselves Christians, should, with the greatest care and diligence, seek an accurate and adequate knowledge of this interesting subject, as far as they can deduce it from the sacred Scriptures. It is therefore intended in this Essay to make some observations on mediation in general;—to explain the nature and ends of our Lord's mediation in particular;—to show in what respects he, and none else, was qualified to sustain such an office;—and to prove from Scripture, that he is a Mediator, according to the import of the term as here explained.

The interposition of a mediator in the affairs of men implies, that some difference, or ground of difference, subsists between the two parties: it supposes that, at least, one of them has cause of complaint or resentment against the other; and that consequences injurious to one or both of them, or to those connected with them, may be apprehended, if the controversy

be not amicably terminated. To prevent these effects, some person, either of his own accord, or at the request, and by the appointment, of one or both of the contending parties, interposes; and endeavours, by his authority, influence, or good offices, to effect a pacification, on such terms as are supposed to be equitable, or at least not materially injurious to either side: for if a mediator should take great care of the rights and interests of one party, and evidently neglect those of the other; he would be justly condemned, as acting inconsistently with the design and nature of his office. He should, therefore, behave as the friend of both parties; accommodating the differences according to the justice of their claims, and in a manner as satisfactory to each of them as can consist with equity and impartiality.

In some cases a superior in station or power may assume the office of mediator, and by authority induce the contending parties to accept of the terms proposed to each of them. In others, the end may be accomplished by argument, remonstrance, or persuasion: and this is nothing more than convincing both parties, that they ought to make, or accept of, such concessions, for the sake of peace and their mutual good, as are equitable and reasonable; and then inducing them to act according to the dictates of their understanding and conscience. But sometimes, especially when one party is much inferior to the other, or has been highly criminal or injurious, the office of a mediator chiefly consists in prevailing with the offended superior to accept of such concessions and satisfaction as the other can make; and not to proceed against

him with rigour, though he deserves it: and if this can be effected, it only remains for him to prevail with the inferior, or criminal party, to make the required concessions. A mediator, however, on some occasions, out of great love and pity to the offender, may offer to make compensation at his own expence for the injuries done; in order that the other party may, without loss or dishonour, lay aside his purposes of inflicting deserved punishment.

Various qualifications are necessary for a person, who sustains the office of a mediator between two parties at variance, in any of the cases which have been stated; but our attention must principally be fixed upon the last; as it doubtless most accords with the interesting subject, which it is intended to illustrate. Should any one interpose between a sovereign prince and his rebellious subjects, in order to prevail with him to show them mercy; it is obvious, that he should himself be free from all suspicion of in the least favouring their rebellion; otherwise his interposition would render him the more suspected. He ought likewise to be a person of that rank and character, or to have performed those important services, which entitle him to the confidence of his sovereign, and tend to render it honourable for him, at his instance, to pardon those that deserve punishment. Every one must perceive the absurdity of a criminal undertaking to mediate in behalf of his associates in guilt; nor could an obscure person, of suspected or exceptionable character, and on no account entitled to the affection or confidence of the prince, attempt such an interposition, without manifest impropriety. If a

mpany of men, in these circumstances, were desi-
us of conciliating the favour of their offended Lord;
ey would naturally turn their thoughts to one of his
ief nobles, to some person that had rendered signal
rvices with great renown, or to his principal favour-
:;* or even to his beloved son, if they had any pros-
ct or hope of obtaining his good offices. And if
ch a mediator could be engaged in their behalf, with
firm and cordial an attachment to their cause, as to
y with Paul, when he mediated with Philemon for
nesimus, "If they have wronged thee, or owe thee
aught, put that on mine account, I will repay it;"†
d if he really were competent to make good such an
gagement, his interposition would have its utmost
vantage for success.

But no mediator can be fully authorized for his of-
e, unless, by one means or other, both parties allow
his interference: at least his mediation cannot have
due effect, till they both accede to his terms, or
an of accommodating their differences. For if one
rty authorize him to propose certain terms to the
her, as the utmost that he will yield; the whole must
t be frustrated, and the dissention perpetuated,
ould these terms be pertinaciously rejected; except
hen the mediator acts also as an umpire, and com-
ls the parties to accept of his prescribed conditions.
—There is likewise an evident propriety in a media-
r's standing in such a relation to each of the parties,
to lay a foundation for his being considered as an
qual friend to both of them, in all respects, in which

* Acts xii. 20. † Philem. 18, 19.

their rank, or the justice of the cause, will admit of it: so that there may be no reason to suspect, that a person, thus situated, will sacrifice the interests or rights of one party, from a partial regard to the other.

These observations concerning the office of a mediator, as well known among men, may enable us to understand more clearly the doctrine of Scripture respecting the mediatorial office of Emmanuel: and we may very properly argue from them, in something of the same manner that Paul did from the office of high priest among the Jews, when he wrote to them concerning the High Priesthood of Christ. This indeed was a divinely appointed type and shadow of the subject, which the apostle illustrated and confirmed by it; whereas our arguments from the office of a mediator among men, derive their force from analogy, or the particulars in which the cases coincide. Yet the Lord himself having represented the office of Christ as that of a Mediator; it is manifest that he intended to assist, and not to mislead or perplex our apprehensions by the allusion: and this allows us to make what use we can, with caution and sobriety, of the case alluded to, in order to explain more clearly the subject which it illustrates.

We must therefore in the next place reflect on the *need* there was for "a Mediator between God and "man." Had the human species never forfeited the favour, or incurred the displeasure, of their bountiful Creator, a Mediator could never have been wanted; for God, who is Love, was of himself sufficiently disposed to favour and bless the work of his own hands. Had not man been brought into a state of alienation *from* God, and exposed to his just indignation; no re-

conciliation, and consequently no Peace-maker, could have been required. The angels in heaven approach their God and Father, without the intervention of a mediator; and so doubtless did man, before sin had disturbed this blessed state of amity.—When the first Adam had broken the commandment, and forfeited the covenant, of his Creator, and so sin and death had entered into the world, to pass upon the whole race that was about to descend from him; then, and not before, was "the second Adam the Lord "from heaven," promised to be the Mediator of a new covenant; under the title of "the Seed of the "woman, who should bruise the serpent's head." Thus the entrance of sin rendered the interposition of a mediator necessary: and the malignity or desert of sin alone required such an exalted Mediator, and such a meritorious mediation, as the Scripture reveals and proposes to us. For if a righteous and holy God had not viewed sin, as so evil in its nature and effects, that it would be utterly inconsistent with his glory to show mercy to transgressors, unless some constitution of this kind, were previously formed, that love, which provided the Mediator, would have sufficed (so to speak) to induce him to pardon them without one. We must not, therefore, imagine that the mediation of Christ is needful, in order to prevail with God to pity, love, and save sinners: on the contrary, we should consider it, as the grand *effect* of his compassion and good will; and as intended to render the exercise of his plenteous mercy consistent with the honour of his justice, and conducive to the harmonious display of all his perfections.

Men had forfeited their Creator's favour and de-

served his anger, by transgression; they had also lost his holy image, and become vile and miserable, even "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction:" but it pleased their offended Sovereign, "to the praise of his "glory," and the display of his infinite and everlasting mercy and bounty, (for God is Love,) to purpose the reconciliation, recovery, and eternal felicity of an innumerable multitude of the fallen race. It did not, however, become him, as the infinitely righteous and holy Governor of the universe, to show such favour to the guilty and unholy, without adopting some decisive method of declaring his judgment concerning their crimes and deserts. Otherwise it might have been supposed, that he did not utterly abhor sin; that he meant to desist from the demands of his violated law; that it needed not to have been made so strict; that it was not requisite for his rational creatures on all occasions to obey it, or that transgressors should be punished according to its sanction: and that it was owing to some other cause, than his perfect justice and holy abhorrence of evil, that he so severely executed vengeance on some of his rebellious creatures. To obviate such conclusions, it became the glory of God to devise some plan, according to which the largest exercise of his pardoning mercy and saving grace might consist with the most affecting display of his avenging justice and hatred of iniquity. For this purpose, as it is manifest from the Scriptures, his infinite wisdom and love formed, and then revealed the plan of a Mediator, through whom a new covenant was proposed to sinners; according to which all things pertaining to eternal life are freely bestowed for his sake, on every one without exception, who seeks them in

ppointed way. Thus the riches of God's mercy abounded "towards us in *all wisdom and pru-ıce.*"*—Through the intervention of a Media-nners are saved: and yet God does not so much em to favour sin! nay, he in the most decisive er shows his judgment of what punishment it ves, his holy abhorrence of it, and his determi-ı, in all possible cases, "to magnify the law and ke it honourable!"

in discoursing on such subjects, we are con-ed to accommodate our language and reasonings : conceptions and usages of men; we in this ct imitate the sacred writers, and can aptly express ıeaning in the words which they have used before hereas they, who object to these explanations, bliged to represent the style of Scripture, as ; (if not absurdly) figurative; and frequently to ın their disciples against too literal explanation nay, it costs them much labour, as well as great uity, to furnish such interpretations as accord their *rational* systems, and which common rea-:ould never have thought of. And what is this, ı insinuation, that the sacred writers have used ıge, extremely suited to mislead the unlearned mple part of mankind? But indeed, the apostle ıown at large, that the mediation of Christ was ed especially, to the end, "that God might be and the justifier of the believer;" that is, "a God, and a Saviour."†

ve examine the subject more minutely, we shall

* Eph. i. 7, 8. † Rom. iii. Is. xlv. 21.

find, that the mediation of Christ is of that kind, whic
required such a person to sustain and perform it,
the Scriptures declare that he is. If any one should inte
pose between an offended sovereign and his rebellio
subjects, in order that, for his sake, exemption fro
punishment and the grant of valuable privileges, shou
be conferred on them; he must stand high in the est
mation of the prince, and be a person of known wort
and dignity among all who are acquainted with th
transaction: otherwise there would be no ground t
expect that his requests would be attended to; no
would care be taken, if they were, to manifest th
demerit of the pardoned offenders, or the clemen
and bounty of their reconciled sovereign. But wh
man, or mere creature, could thus interpose betwe
the infinite God and the apostate children of me
Who could have thought of requesting, that, *for h
sake and at his instance*, all the crimes of those wh
came *in his name* should be pardoned, all their wa
supplied, and all spiritual and eternal blessings co
ferred upon them? Would not such an intrusion ha
been considered as an act of rebellion, or at least
deliberate perference of the happiness of rebels to t
glory of God? Who among the angels of heaven,
any of the creatures that God has made, could pret
to personal dignity, excellency, merit, or services, s
ficient to authorize such a requisition? Or how co
it have been imagined, that, if the Lord did not t
good to spare and bless sinners, "for his own nam
" sake," he would be induced to do it for the sake
a derived dependent being, who lived, moved, and e
isted in and by him alone? If it had been consiste
with the display of his glory, to save sinners witho

an atonement, he would not have wanted any external inducement to do it: but if his honour and the salvation of sinners *in this way* were incompatible, who could possibly prevail with him to dishonour himself? Or could any mere created being have undertaken to render the exercise of mercy and grace too sinners, consistent with his perfect justice and the honour of his law? Alas! their best services must all be due for themselves, and on account of benefits already conferred: even their own felicity, strictly speaking, must be gratuitous, not merited: nor hath one of them power to endure the punishment of a single transgression, without finally sinking under it; for, "the wages of sin is death." So that it cannot be conceived, that the office of Mediator between God and man, which Christ performs, could possibly have been sustained by a mere creature; or that any one had sufficient love to have induced him to undertake it for the benefit of the unholy and rebellious. But when the eternal Son of the Father; when He, who created and upholds all worlds, *for whom* all things were made, and whom all angels worship; voluntarily engaged himself to mediate a peace between the offended sovereign of the universe and his sinful creatures; when, "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places was known—the manifold wisdom of God;" and all the holy intelligences that ever have been, or shall be, made acquainted with this grand design, must perceive, that his personal dignity and excellence; his ineffable union with the Father and relation to him; as well as his boundless power, love, and holi-

ness, rendered him in all respects the proper Person to accomplish it, and bring it to a happy and glorious event: and that he alone was competent for such an undertaking.

If a Mediator was to be constituted for such ends as have been stated, it must be proper that the Lord should choose and appoint him to this important office. "No one taketh this honour to himself, but he "that is called of God." A self-appointed mediator must be deemed an intruder. The criminals could not reasonably expect to have the nomination of him; they had no just ground of complaint: the whole design must be formed for their relief and advantage; the rights and glory of God must be first considered and secured in the execution of it; and he alone could know whom it became him to trust with so vast a concern, as involved in it, not only the interests of his universal kingdom, but the eternal honour of his own great Name. We know to whom he hath committed this office; and we are sure, from the event, that he saw none else, in heaven or earth, whom he could so properly have appointed to it: for he does nothing in vain, and would not have sent his only begotten Son, on a design, which one of his servants could have executed with the same success and advantage. But we may understand enough in this matter to perceive, that it would have been highly improper, for the infinite God to have appointed a mere creature to this office, and to have entrusted his own glory, the salvation of innumerable souls, and the interests of his everlasting kingdom, into such hands. In this grand

concern "he puts no trust in his servants, and his an-"gels he charges with folly."*

At the same time, however, this Mediator is, in all respects, suited to our case, and worthy of our confidence. If it had been revealed, that God would deal with us through a Mediator, and we had been required to look out for one, on whom we could most entirely and unreservedly depend, when eternal happiness or misery was at stake, what could we have done? We could never have entrusted such an important cause in the hands of any mere man: nay, the more we had considered the matter, in all its difficulties and consequences, the greater hesitation should we have felt, to confide it to the hands of a mere creature: for all are changeable; and we should have been apprehensive, lest some want of power, love, truth, wisdom, or constancy, should defeat the whole, when our eternal All was at stake. Yet we could never have thought of such a Mediator, as our offended God hath himself provided, appointed, and revealed; who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," "the "true and the holy One," "Emmanuel," "God "over all, blessed for evermore." Here we can have no ground for fear: unbelief alone can hesitate. He, whose power sustains the universe, is able to save our souls in all possible cases. He, who is worthy to be entrusted with the rights of God and the eternal glory of his Name, must also be worthy to be entrusted with our immortal interests; (for our *rights* in this respect are all forfeited:) and he, who, perfect in justice

* *Job.* iv. 18.

and purity himself, could so pity and condescend to guilty polluted creatures, as to undertake such an office wholly for their benefit, cannot want love to accomplish whatever is wanting, for the eternal salvation of all who accept of his mediation.

But the appointed method, in which this great Mediator performs his most gracious design, has laid a still more firm foundation for our unshaken confidence. It was proper, that the terms of our reconciliation should be proposed by our God himself: and, as these had respect to the Mediator, they required him to assume our nature into personal union with his Deity; that, as "God manifest in the flesh," he might stand related to us also, in the most intimate manner, as our Brother, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our "flesh:" and that so, he might properly represent us, undertake our cause, as interested in it by the ties of one common nature, and encourage our most unlimited confidence in his compassion and love. Thus hath he humbled, "emptied," and impoverished himself. As they, in behalf of whom he mediated, "were "partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of "the same:" "he is not ashamed to call them bre-"thren:" and, as his union with the Father, in the divine nature, renders him a proper Person to vindicate his rights and display his glory; so, in virtue of his union with us in the human nature, we may most cheerfully rely on him to take care of our immortal souls.—This also shows the propriety of his interposing in *our behalf*; for some connexion or relation is supposed to subsist between the mediator and those for whom he acts; else, why does he solicit for *them*,

rather than for others in similar circumstances? And, even if the plea be supported by some payment or satisfaction made; it seems proper, that there should be a ground, on which to determine for whom this is done, and to whom the benefit of it shall belong.

When, therefore, the Son of God undertook the office of Mediator between God and man, "he took "not on him the nature of angels," as he meant not to mediate in their behalf, but he assumed the human nature. And this renders it very obvious, and for us natural to conclude, that all he did and suffered on earth, and all he now performs in heaven, in the character of Mediator, was exclusively intended for the benefit of men, whose nature he bears, for whom he mediates, and to whose account the whole will be imputed; that is, to such of them as avail themselves of his mediation. For if men, who have this divine constitution stated to them with suitable evidence, do not approve of the Mediator, but reject his interposition, they of course exclude themselves from the benefit of it.—We shall, therefore, in the two following Essays, consider more particularly the righteousness and atonement of our great Mediator, and his continual intercession in heaven for us. It is, indeed, almost impossible to discourse in general concerning his mediation, without in some degree adverting to these subjects; but it would be improper any further to anticipate them in this place.

It does not seem necessary to attempt a *laboured* proof, that our Lord's mediation is of that nature, and instituted for those purposes, which have been stated. The general language of Scripture conveys this idea

of it, to those who understand and believe it in its obvious and literal import. In particular, the scope of the apostle Paul's reasoning, in the epistle to the Hebrews, establishes the doctrine under consideration. Was Moses a typical mediator, at the giving of the law, that through his intervention the national covenant might be ratified between God and the people? This only shadowed forth a better covenant, founded on better promises, which Christ hath mediated between the Lord and his spiritual Israel: and "this Person "was counted worthy of more honour than Moses," being a "Son over his own house," which he had builded; whereas "Moses was no more than a ser-"vant," or even a part of the house itself.* Were the high priests, of the order of Aaron, typical mediators between God and the people, in virtue of their perpetual sacrifices and the burning of incense? The insufficiency and unprofitableness of such mediators, and of all their sacrifices and services, must be shown, to make it manifest, that "another Priest must arise, "after another order;" whose dignity, excellency, and invaluable ministrations might really effect those ends, which the other merely prefigured and represented, as in a picture, or rather as an indistinct and feeble shadow. For through Him believers have access granted them to the mercy-seat of God, in the holy places not made with hands: whereas before, the very shadow of this blessing was concealed by the veil, and none might approach to it on pain of death, but the high priest alone; nor he on more than one day in a year, with

* Heb. iii. 1—6.

the blood of the sacrifices and the burning of incense. What do all these arguments (which fill up more than half the Epistle) signify, but that Jesus is such a Mediator as has been described? "There is then one "Mediator between God and man; even *the Man* "CHRIST JESUS."* No doubt he is truly man, and performs his mediation in human nature; for he assumed our flesh for this very purpose: but the apostle by declaring him to be the one Mediator, excludes all other Mediators. Moses and the priests of Aaron's line were, in a certain sense, mediators between God and man; and every believer when he prays for others, in some degree interposes his requests between God and them, to seek mercy in their behalf. Yet Christ is the only Mediator; because he alone is capable of, and appointed to perform, such a mediation as hath been described, in virtue of his personal dignity and the ransom which he hath made. "Through him we "have access to the Father." "He is our Peace-"maker:" "our Advocate with the Father." He says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, "no man cometh to the Father but by me:"† so that no man, who rejects the mediation of Christ, ever did, or ever will, find acceptance with God. We must come to God in his name, asking all blessings for his sake, and presenting all our services by his hands, and through his intercession, even "giving thanks to "God and the Father through him."

In this view of the subject, we may consider Christ as the Mediator between God and man, in such a

* 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. † John xiv. 6.

sense, that no sinner on earth can be found to whom we may not propose all the benefits of his mediation; provided he truly come to God by faith in Christ; whereas fallen angels, and those who have died in their sins, are wholly excluded from this benefit by the very constitution of the covenant which he mediated. But all other mediators, and all attempts to approach God without a Mediator, are an affront both to the Father and the Son; even as the sacrifices, which the Israelites offered contrary to the law, were an abomination to the Lord. As, therefore, we must shortly meet our offended Sovereign at his awful tribunal; let us now avail ourselves of this inestimable appointment; and constantly approach his throne of grace, through our "faithful and merciful High Priest" and Mediator, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help "in every time of need."

ESSAY IX.

On the Merits and Atonement of Christ.

HE opinion that the Deity might be appeased by ıiatory sacrifices, has been very widely diffused ɔng the human race: and the attempt has generally n made, by shedding the blood, and burning a part the body, of some useful animal. This notion and ctice seem very remote from the dictates of our na-ıl reason; and it is extremely improbable, that they uld have been the result of men's invention. We y therefore most rationally conclude, that it is olly the doctrine of revelation, and the appointment God, handed down by tradition, from the progeni-ɜ of our race, to the several branches of their pos-ty: and it is certain that we meet with it in the ıle immediately after the entrance of sin. When in's oblation of the first-fruits of the earth was re-ted, and Abel's sacrifice of the firstlings of the :k was accepted; we may naturally conclude, that : latter was presented according to the divine ap-intment, and that the former was not. But if we quire into the reason of this appointment, the prac-

tice of the patriarchs, and the multiplied precepts in the Mosaick law, as to this particular, we shall not easily arrive at any satisfactory solution; except we admit the doctrine of Christ's atonement, and suppose the whole to refer to him, as the substance of all these shadows. I shall, therefore, in this Essay, endeavour to explain, illustrate, and prove that doctrine, and to show its importance in the Christian religion.

The rules and general usages, respecting expiatory sacrifices under the Old Testament, may assist us in understanding the nature of our Lord's atonement, of which they were types and prefigurations.* The offender, whose crimes might be thus expiated, was required to bring "his offering of the flock, or of the herd, to the door of the tabernacle." The very nature of the animals appointed for sacrifice was significant: not the ferocious, the noxious, the subtle, or the unclean; but the gentle, docile, and valuable; and none of these might be offered, but such as were "without blemish," or perfect in their kind. The offender was directed to bring an offering, in which he had *a property*, to be presented unto God, and thus substituted in his stead for this particular purpose. He must then "lay his hands upon the head" of the sacrifice; which denoted the *typical* translation of guilt from him, by imputation to the substituted animal. This is generally thought to have been attended by a confession of his sins, and prayers for pardon through the acceptance of his oblation: and doubtless it implied as much, and would be attended at least with so

* Heb. x. 1.

:votions to that effect by every pious Israelite.* lood of the sacrifice was then shed; which, be- he life" of every animal, was reserved to make ient, and therefore was not allowed to be eaten, the Old Testament dispensation.† Afterwards dy, or a part of it, was burned upon the alter ie fire which came immediately from heaven, : the opening of the tabernacle-worship, and af- ls at the consecration of Solomon's temple.‡— who can help perceiving, that this fire represent- avenging justice of God, (who is "a consum- ire;") and that, when it consumed the harmless nished sacrifice, whilst the guilty offerer es- it aptly prefigured the way of a sinner's salvation, h the expiatory sufferings of the spotless b of God?" The animal's violent death, by the ig of its blood, denoted the offender's desert of al death; and the subsequent burning of its flesh, showed him to be exposed to future ven- : but then, they represented the guilt and pun- t, in both respects, as translated from him to ·ifice, which bore them in his stead.—The whole my concluded with the sprinkling of the blood, many cases the application of it to all those that pertained to the worship of God; which ly typified the believer's deliverance from guilt nishment, from the sting and dread of death, ally from death itself, from sin and all its con- ces; the acceptance of his person and services,

·i. 4. iii. 2. iv. 4. xvi. 21. † Gen. ix. 4. Lev. xvii. 11.
‡ Lev. ix. 24. 2 Chron. vii. 1—3.

and his participation of eternal life and felicity, through "Him who loved him, and washed him from his sins "in his own blood."

These appointments were varied, in divers particulars, as they respected the several kinds of sacrifices: but most of them coincided in the grand outlines here mentioned. The paschal lamb, the flesh of which was roasted and eaten, and the bodies of the sin-offerings for the congregation, which were burned without the camp, form the principal exceptions: but these variations serve to illustrate the several parts of that great subject which all the sacrifices were intended to exhibit.—Even the thank-offerings and peace-offerings, though evidently typical of the believer's spiritual worship, and communion with God and with the saints; were attended with the shedding and sprinkling of the blood, and the burning of the fat, of the sacrifice on which the people feasted. Nay, the very purifications with water, (the emblem of sanctification,) the re-admission of a leper into the congregation, the consecration of a priest, and the performance of a Nazarite's vow, were, in different ways, connected with the same observances. "Almost all "things were purged with blood, and without shed-"ding of blood there was no remission:"* so that idea ran through the whole ritual law, and was interwoven with every part of the worship performed by the ancient church of God.

We need not be surprised, that they who overlook

* Heb. ix. 22.

the typical import of the ritual law, or doubt of the atonement of Christ, should either consider these institutions as 'an overgrown mass of trivial ceremo-'nies,' or attempt to account for them from the policy of Moses; or to trace them to the customs of the surrounding nations. But indeed the Israelites were expressly forbidden *to imitate the Gentiles:* several institutions in the law were intended to keep them at a distance from their superstitions: if any agreement be found in other respects, it is far more reasonable to suppose, that the Gentiles borrowed their usages from the Israelites, than that the Israelites were encouraged or required to copy the worship of idolaters: and the Epistle to the Hebrews sufficiently proves, to all who read it as the word of God, that these ceremonies were shadows or types of the redemption by Jesus Christ, as made by him, and as received by the believer.—Indeed some persons, of great eminence in their line, would persuade us, that the writers of the New Testament accommodated their language on this subject to the usages of the Jews; and rather wrote agreeably to vulgar notions and prejudices, than according to the true nature of the subject. This must mean, (if it mean more, than at any rate to evade an argument, which cannot be answered,) that the *apostles were mistaken*, or that *they wilfully misled mankind.* We may therefore safely infer, from this method of reasoning on such a subject, that the *divine inspiration* of the New Testament in general, of the Epistles in particular, and especially of that to the Hebrews, must be given up by all who persist in denying the *real atonement of Christ*, whenever this argument is

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"Known unto God are all his works, from the be-"ginning of the world."* What man of common sense therefore, if not warped by prejudice, can suppose that the Lord, having appointed a number of ceremonies, without any reference to a future dispensation, and not suited to give mankind any just views of it, but the contrary; should afterwards so arrange that dispensation, or at least leave his servants so to speak of it, as to lead men to form notions more conformed to those antiquated rites, than to its real nature? Who can conceive, that this new revelation should be made in such language, as must give believers erroneous views of it; unless they are extremely careful how they understand it, make large allowances for the prejudices of education in those who first propagated it, and employ much ingenious labour to discover the truth, by divesting it of the numerous metaphors under which it lies concealed or obscured? Surely, if we allow the Scriptures to be the word of the unerring, unchangeable, and all-wise God, we can scarcely speak of such a method of interpretation, without failing of that reverence which we owe to his divine majesty! Does an architect, when about to erect a magnificent edifice, purposely arrange his plan to suit some inconvenient scaffolding, which happens to be upon the spot, having been raised on another occasion? If he build according to a scaffolding previously made by his directions, is he ever supposed to form the plan of his structure for the sake of the scaffolding? Or does any one doubt, that the scaffolding was

* Acts xv. 18.

raised to suit the plan he had already drawn for his intended building? And is it not almost infinitely more *rational* to suppose, that the Mosaick law was arranged, with a reference to the future revelation of the gospel: than that the gospel was *obscured* and *misstated*, that it might be made apparently to accord to the abrogated ceremonies of the law?

Though "without shedding of blood, there was no "remission" of sins under the old dispensation; "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and "goats should take away sins."* If the question should be proposed to a Socinian, why this was "not "possible?" he might perhaps find it not very easy to give a *direct* and *satisfactory* answer. But if we allow (according to the idea of "no remission without the "shedding of blood,") that the necessity of an atonement, in order to forgiveness, originates from the infinite holiness and justice of God, and the intrinsic evil and desert of sin; and the consequent impossibility that he could pass by sin, without showing his abhorrence of it, and determination to punish it according to its demerit: we shall readily perceive, that nothing could render it consistent with the divine glory to pardon and save sinners, which did not exhibit God's justice and holiness in as clear a light in showing them mercy, as these attributes would have appeared in, had he executed the threatened vengeance. And if this were the case, however it might suit the design of infinite wisdom, to appoint the sacrifices of lambs, bulls, and goats, as types and shi-

* Heb. ix. 22. x. 4.

ans of grace, or conditions of temporal re-
yet they could not possibly take away the
in, because they were *not adequate exhibi-*
he infinite justice and holiness of God. For
portion could the death of an animal bear to
sion of that guilt, which merited the eternal
nt of an immortal soul? Or how could ra-
atures behold, in such an observance, God's
ed of sin and love of sinners? The same
is conclusive, in respect of the vicarious
of any mere man, or creature.

se it were right that one creature should bear
shment merited by another; and that one
found, free from guilt, and willing to be sub-
the place of his guilty fellow-creature: yet
only answer, *one for one, body for body, life*
soul for soul: his temporal sufferings could
er to the temporal release of the condemned
but could not be an adequate ransom for his
soul from future punishment: much less
expiate the guilt of the unnumbered crimes
millions. Should it be said, that this might
d had so appointed: I answer, that God ap-
he sacrifices of bulls and goats, yet it was
ble that they should take away sin;" and
ason before assigned, it was *impossible* that
ld appoint them as more than *a type of the*
ment.—But no mere man can be found, who
imself deserved the wrath of God: no man's
soul are his own: no mere creature could be
bear the vengeance of heaven for another,
ght; and none might if he would. It may be

our duty to lay down our lives for our brethren; but it cannot be allowable for us to choose to be eternally unholy and miserable. The eternal Son of the Father, therefore, seeing that no other sacrifice could suffice, said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."*

I do not say, that the Almighty *could not* have devised some other way of redemption: but we can conceive no other, by which perfect justice and purity could harmonize with boundless mercy; and, as infinite wisdom gave this the preference, we are sure that it was in itself most eligible. The dignity of the divine Redeemer, as One with the Father in the unity of the Godhead; his eternal relation to the Father, as the adequate object of his infinite love; his appointment to his office, and voluntary susception of it; his incarnation, and consequent relation to us in the human nature; the perfect purity of his manhood; the complete obedience of his whole life, amidst all kinds of difficulties and temptations; the tortures and ignominy of his death; the entire resignation and meekness with which he suffered; the principle from which his obedience and submission sprang; and the end to which the whole was directed, when duly considered and estimated, will combine to show, that he more honoured the law of God and its awful sanction, by his righteousness and atonement, than if all men had either perfectly obeyed or finally perished. When the Father was *pleased* thus to *wound* and *bruise* his well beloved Son, for the transgressions of his people; his judgment concerning the evil and desert of sin ap-

* Heb. x. 4—10.

peared most illustrious. His love to sinners was shown to be inconceivably great; yet he would rather lay the load of their guilt and punishment on him "in whom "his soul delighted," than pardon them without testifying his abhorrence of their crimes! No encouragement could thus be given to others to venture on sin: no other sacrifice of this value and efficacy could be found: all must see, that punishment was not the *arbitrary act of an inexorable Judge;* but *the unavoidable result of perfect holiness and justice, even in a Being of infinite mercy.* Thus every mouth will at length be stopped, or filled with adoration; every heart impressed with awe and astonishment; every hope taken away from the impenitent and presumptuous; and the glory of God more fully manifested in all his harmonious perfections, than by all his other works, judgments, and dispensations. The story of Zaleucus, prince of the Locrians, is well known: to show his abhorrence of adultery, and his determination to execute the law he had enacted, condemning the adulterer to the loss of both his eyes; and at the same time to evince his love to his son who had committed that crime; he willingly submitted to lose one of his own eyes, and ordered at the same time one of his son's to be put out! Now what adulterer could hope to escape, when power was vested in a man, whom neither self-love, nor natural affection in its greatest force, could induce to dispense with the law, or relax the rigour of its sentence? So, in God's way of saving sinners, the language both of the Father and the Son is manifestly and most emphatically 'Let the law be magnified and 'made honourable, in the sight of the whole universe.'

I would not embarrass these brief Essays by any thing superfluous or dubious; yet it seems to fall in with the design of them to observe, that the reward of righteousness is not annexed to *a mere exemption from sin;* (for Adam on the day of his creation was free from sin;) but to *actual obedience during the appointed term of probation.* So that the perfect righteousness of Christ was as necessary, as the atonement of his death, to his mediatorial work on earth: not only, as freedom from personal guilt was requisite, in order to his bearing and expiating the sins of his people; but also as the meritorious purchase of their forfeited inheritance, that the second Adam's benefit might answer to the loss sustained through the first Adam. His was, however, a suffering obedience, and so, expiatory; his death was the highest perfection of obedience, and so, meritorious. We need not therefore very exactly distinguish between them: yet it is proper to maintain, that the believer is pardoned, because his sin was imputed to Christ, and expiated by his sacrifice; and that he is justified and made an heir of heaven, because Christ "brought in an everlasting "righteousness," "which is unto, and upon, all them "that believe." Our Lord did not indeed bear all the misery to which the sinner is exposed: not being personally guilty, he could not endure the torments of an accusing conscience; knowing that he should triumph and reign in glory, he could not feel the horrors of despair; and his infinite dignity rendering him able at once to make an all-sufficient atonement, it was not requisite that his sufferings should be eternal, as ours must otherwise have been. But he endured the scorn-

he rage, and the cruelty of men, and all which they ould inflict; the utmost malice of the powers of dark- ess; and the wrath and righteous vengeance of the ather: he bore shame, pain, and death in all its bit- erness; and what he suffered in his soul, during his gonies in the garden, and when he exclaimed on the ross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken "me?" we cannot conceive. We only know, that "it pleased the Lord to bruise him:" the sword of vengeance awoke against him, and the "Father spared "him not." We may, therefore, conclude, that he en- lured as much of that very misery, which the wicked will suffer from the wrath of God and the malice of he infernal powers, as could consist with perfect in- nocence and love, and the sure hope of speedy and final deliverance.

Many objections have been made to the doctrine of a *real atonement*, and a *vicarious sacrifice for sin;* as if it were irrational, or unjust, or gave an unamiable view of the divine character; or as if it were unfavour- able to the cause of morality and virtue: and great pains have been taken to explain away the language of holy Scripture on this subject, as if it did not imply any of those things which the unlearned reader is apt to infer from it. It cannot be expected, that I should give a particular answer to each of these objections, which result rather from the state of the heart, than from any solid grounds of reasoning: it may suffice to observe in general, that "God hath made foolish "the wisdom of this world;" that "the natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for "they are foolishness to him;" and especially, that

" the preaching of *the cross* is foolishness to them that " perish." Adverting to such testimonies of the Holy Spirit, we shall know what to think concerning those exclamations of *irrational* and *absurd*, which many of those, who are wise in this world and in their own eyes, employ in opposing the doctrine of the atonement.—Neither can there be any *injustice* in this statement of it: for if one, who was both *able* and *willing* to do it, was pleased to ransom his brethren from deserved eternal ruin, by enduring temporal sufferings and death as their surety, what injustice could there be in accepting such a vicarious satisfaction for sin?—And how can that doctrine give an *unamiable view of the Deity*, which shows him to be infinite in righteousness, holiness, love, mercy, faithfulness, and wisdom; and displays these, and all other conceivable moral excellencies, in full perfection and entire harmony? It can only appear so to sinners; because *justice and holiness are not amiable in the eyes of the unjust and unholy*. Or how can that doctrine be prejudicial to the cause of morality, which furnishes the most powerful motives and encouragements to holiness, and shows sin in all its horrid deformity, and with all its tremendous effects; and which has uniformly done more to " teach men to deny ungodliness and " worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and " godly in this present world," than all other expedients besides have even appeared to do?

Let us then proceed to state a few select arguments, which demonstrate that the doctrine, as it has been explained and illustrated, is contained in the holy Scriptures.

I. They contain many plain and decisive declara-
ns on the subject. It is not only said, that Jesus
redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made
a curse for us;"* that "he suffered once for sins,
the just for" (or instead of) "the unjust:"† but
at he "bare our sins in his own body on the tree;"
d "was made sin for us."‡ The prophet, speak-
g above seven hundred years before, "of the suf-
ferings of Christ and the glory that should follow,"
ving observed, that he "bore our griefs and carried
our sorrows," "was wounded for our transgressions
and bruised for our iniquities," shows the *reason of*
is, by adding, that "the Lord laid," or *caused to*
et, "on him the iniquity of us all:" so that *it was*
acted, and he became answerable:§ according to the
nuine meaning of the next words, rendered in our
rsion, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted."
hus he would "justify many, for he would bear
their iniquities," and not merely *the punishment due*
them. We may, in many cases, say that the inno-
nt suffers for the guilty, when one is exposed to
ss or pain by means of another's fault, or for his be-
fit: but can it be said, with propriety, that the Lord
ys upon the innocent sufferer the *iniquity* of the offen-
r, or that the latter *bears* the *sins* of the former; when
o translation or imputation of guilt is intended, and
o real atonement made? If so, what words can con-
y the ideas of imputation and atonement? What de-

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* Gal. iii. 13. † 1 Pet. iii. 18. Is. liii.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 24.
§ Bishop Lowth's Translation of Isaiah.

terminate meaning can there be in language? Or w
doctrine can be deduced with certainty from the
cred oracles? The expressions, *ransom*, *redempt*
purchased, *bought with a price*, *propitiation*, and
veral others, concur to prove this doctrine.

II. The testimony of John the Baptist, "Bel
"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of
"world,"* contains a very conclusive argument
this subject. Whatever other reasons may be thou
of, for a lamb being the selected emblem of the L
Jesus; he could not, *as a Lamb*, *take away sin*, ex
"by the sacrifice of himself." His teaching, r
and example, tend in different ways to reform m
kind; and the influences of his Spirit sanctify the
liever's heart. In these respects he may be said
some sense to take away sin: but, *as a Lamb*, he c
take away the guilt of it only by giving himself t
"slain," that he might "redeem us to God with
"blood;" being the Antitype of the paschal la
and daily sacrifices, even "the Lamb slain from
"foundation of the world."

III. When the apostle argued, that "if Christ w
"not risen, the Corinthian Christians were yet in t
"sins;"† what could he mean, but that, as not
could prove the reality and efficacy of Christ's at
ment, except his resurrection, so nothing could
away their guilt but that atonement? For, their r

* John i. 29. † 1 Cor. xv. 17.

nation and conversion to the worship and service of the true God was a fact, which could not be denied, whatever men thought of the doctrines in question.

IV. The same apostle says, that "Christ will appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation."* But did he not appear the first time *without sin?* What then is the meaning of this proposition that at his first coming he *bare our sins*, but at his second he shall appear *without sin*? The words can have no other imaginable sense, but that at his first coming he sustained the *person of a Sinner*, and suffered *instead of us;* but at his second coming he shall appear, not as a sacrifice, but as a Judge.'†

V. The grounds upon which the apostles exhort men to holiness evince the same point. They uniformly draw their arguments, motives, and encouragements from the cross of Christ; "His own self bare "our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being "dead to sin, might live unto righteousness." "Ye are "bought with a price; therefore, glorify God with "your bodies and spirits which are his!"‡ This is indeed the distinguishing peculiarity of their exhortations, in which they differ from those of all others, who have attempted to excite men to virtue or morality.

VI. The appointment of the Lord's supper, in re-

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* Heb. ix. 28. † Tillotson.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 20. 1 Pet. ii. 24. 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. Eph. v. 1, 2, 25, 26. Tit. ii. 11—14. 1 Pet. i. 13—20.

membrance of the body of Christ broken, ar
blood poured out, and as a representation of the
ner in which we become interested in the blessi
his salvation, even by "eating his flesh and dri
"his blood,"* is a most conclusive argument o
subject. The peculiar nature and intent of this
nance will be considered in a future Essay: bu
special event commemorated, and the words o
Lord when he appointed it, "This is my blood
"New Testament, which is shed for you and for n
"for the remissions of sins;" do manifestly
that his death was a *real atonement;* that this *a*
ment is the grand peculiarity of the gospel; and
no man is a genuine Christian, unless by true fai
become a partaker of that inestimable benefit.

VII. Lastly, The songs of the redeemed in he
even of those "who had come out of great tri
"tion," and had shed their blood as martyrs i
cause of Christ, may well close these brief, bu
answerable, arguments in proof of this important
trine. Without one discordant voice, they ascribe
salvation to "the Lamb that was slain, and ha
"deemed them to God with his blood;" "Who
"washed them from their sins in his own blo
But in what sense could *the Lamb that was slain*
them from their sins in his own blood, unless he
truly and literally an *atoning sacrifice* for them?
likewise shows the vast importance of the doctri
the Christian system. It is indeed essential to it

* John vi. 48—58.

he, who denies or overlooks it, cannot have the same judgment of the divine perfections, law, and government, or of the evil and desert of sin, as real Christians have. He cannot approach God in the same way, or with the same plea. He cannot exercise the same kind of repentance or faith; or feel himself under the same obligations, and influenced by the same motives, as they are. He cannot pray, or thank and bless God, for the same benefits; or have the same reasons for gratitude, humility, patience, and meekness. In a word, he cannot be meet for the same heaven; but would dislike the company, dissent from the worship, and disrelish the employments and pleasures, of those who ascribe all their salvation to the atoning blood of the Lamb. And is not this sufficient to prove that he cannot possibly be a partaker of the hope, the love, the joy, which are peculiar to the religion of the crucified Emmanuel?

It is, however, to be feared that numbers assent to this doctrine, who neither understand its nature and tendency, nor are suitably influenced by it. The cross of Christ, when contemplated by an enlightened mind, most emphatically teaches the glory and beauty of the divine character; the reasonableness and excellence of the moral law; the value of immortal souls; the vanity of earthly distinctions; the misery of the most prosperous transgressors; the malignity of sin; the lost state of man; the presumptuous nature of every self-righteous confidence; the inestimable value of this foundation for our hope; the sinner's motives and encouragements to repentance, and the believer's obligations to the most self-denying and devoted obed

ence to his reconciled God and Father.—He therefore, who truly believes and understands this doctrine, and who glories in the cross of Christ alone, habitually gives his eternal concerns a decided preference to every worldly object. He feels an earnest desire to promote the salvation of mankind, especially of those who are most dear to him. He is "crucified "to the world, and the world to him." He repents of all his sins, forsaking and hating them, and seeking the crucifixion of every sinful propensity. Though he entirely renounces all confidence, save in the unmerited mercy of God in Christ Jesus, he yet deems it his pleasure, privilege, and honour, to "live to "him, who died for him and rose again." The example and love of Christ reconcile him to reproach, contempt, self-denial, and persecution for righteousness' sake; and dispose him to forgiveness, love of enemies, enlarged benevolence, and whatever can "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour."

Whilst we would therefore "contend earnestly for "the faith once delivered to the saints," we would also caution every one not to "*imprison* the truth in "unrighteousness." They, who vilify the atonement, are not the only "enemies of the cross of Christ:" for, such as hold the doctrine in a carnal heart, and disgrace it by a sensual life, fall under the same condemnation.* It is to be feared, that many, who are zealous against the fatal Socinian heresy, are tainted with the abominable infection of Antinomianism: and that numbers of another description, who contend for

* Phil. iii. 18—21.

the doctrine of the atonement, do nevertheless rest their hope of salvation principally upon their own moral goodness, and not on the merits and expiatory sufferings of Christ. But, as that "God of all grace," "who spared not his own son, but delivered him up "for us all," will "with him freely give all things" to the true believer; so, assuredly in his awful justice he will not spare any of those, who oppose, neglect, or abuse his great salvation: for "our God is a con-"suming fire."

ESSAY X.

On the Exaltation of Christ, and his appearance in the presence of God in our behalf.

WHEN our Saviour upon the cross was about to commend his spirit into the Father's hand, he said, "It is finished." Whatever the types had prefigured, or the prophets foretold, concerning his obedience, conflicts, and sufferings; whatever the glory of God, the honour of the law, or the rights and satisfaction of divine justice, required; and whatever was necessary, in order to his own final victory, triumph, and exaltation at the right hand of the Father, as our Advocate and Friend, was then fully accomplished; that is, as far as it could be, previously to his death, which immediately followed. He then became conqueror over the world, sin, and Satan, (triumphing over them, even on the cross;) and, having consecrated the grave by his burial, to be a sacred repository for the bodies of his disciples, he arose on the third day a mighty Victor over the king of terrors: and at that crisis commenced the glory which was to follow his sufferings.

The evidences of our Lord's resurrection have been already considered;* the ends answered by that great event may here be briefly mentioned. He thus confirmed, beyond all reasonable doubt, every part of the doctrine which he had taught; proving especially that he was the Son of God, in the peculiar and appropriate sense, in which he had claimed that high relation to the Father, and for which he had been condemned as a blasphemer. He fully evinced, that his atonement had been accepted, and had effectually answered those great and gracious purposes, for which it had been made. He thus became capable of possessing in our nature the mediatorial throne, which had been covenanted to him as the reward of his obedience and sufferings; and to appear, as our Advocate and Intercessor, in the presence of the Father: being our Brother, and glorying in that condescending relation to us. And finally, he was the first-fruits of the general resurrection, the earnest and pledge of that grand and interesting event.

I shall not further enlarge on the circumstances of our Lord's resurrection, or on the instructions that may be deduced from it: but as his mediation is naturally divided into two distinct parts, it regularly falls within the plan of this work, to consider at present that part which he now performs in his heavenly glory, as we before did, that which he fulfilled during his humiliation on earth. From the depth of his voluntary abasement, "he ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." He then "led cap-

* Essay I. p. 14—17.

"tivity captive, and received gifts for men, ye
"for the rebellious also; that the Lord God mi
"dwell among them."* "For the heavens m
"receive him, until the restitution of all things.
"I go," says he to his disciples, "to prepare a pl
"for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you
"will come again and receive you to myself,
"where I am there ye may be also."‡—We
therefore, in this Essay, point out the purposes
which Jesus, "our Forerunner, hath for us ent
"into heaven," and the means by which he prep
the way for our admission to the same place of h
felicity.

The royal prophet introduces Jehovah declar
with an oath, which denoted, "the immutability
"his counsel," that the Messiah was constituted
"Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek;"
and the apostle thence argues, that the Aaron
priesthood was never intended to be perpetual. No
Melchizedek's priesthood especially differed from th
of Aaron, in that it united the regal power with
sacerdotal office; which showed that the Messiah w
to "be a Priest upon a throne."‖ Before we proce
with the subject, however, I would observe, that
affords us a most conclusive proof of our Lo
Deity. The sacred historian makes no mention
Melchizedek's "father, mother, pedigree, *begin*
"*of life*, or end of days;" but introduces him to

* Ps. lxviii. 18. Eph. iv 7—16. † Acts iii. 2
‡ John xiv. 2, 3. § Ps. cx. 4. Gen. xiv. 18. Heb.
‖ Zec. vi. 12, 13.

otice, with mysterious abruptness; he "being," ys the apostle, "made *like unto the Son of God.*"* ut in what sense could this circumstance render him like the Son of God," or a *proper type of him*, ex- pt as it was a shadow of *his* eternal pre-existence? s man, he had, beginning of life like his brethren: d if he, who tabernacled in our nature, had been a e-existent *creature* of the highest order, he must vertheless have had *beginning of life;* and the em- atical silence of Moses, respecting the birth of Mel- izedek, could not have represented him, in any nse, as "like to the Son of God."

The *High Priesthood* of Christ in the sanctuary ove, first requires our consideration.—On the great y of atonement,† the high-priest, (not arrayed in his bes of glory and beauty, but clothed in linen gar- ents like his brethren,) having offered the sin-offer- gs for himself and for the people, entered the holy of olies, with the sprinkling of blood, and the burning incense by the fire taken from the alter of burnt- fering: and thus, as Israel's typical intercessor, he peared before the mercy-seat, as in the presence of od, for them. From the *holy nation* a *holy tribe* was lected, from that tribe a *holy family*, and from that mily a *holy person;* (that is typically and by conse- ation:) yet even this individual, selected with such re and so many precautions, from the whole human ce, was not allowed on pain of death to enter within e veil, or to approach Jehovah even on a mercy- t, except on one day in a year; nor on that day,

* Heb. vii. 13. † Lev. xvi.

without the previous offering of sacrifices, the blood of which he must sprinkle before the ark, whilst the smoke of the incense perfumed the holy place. The whole of this appointment was calculated to show, in the most significant manner, to what an immense distance from their offended Creator sin had removed fallen men; and how difficult it was to render their return, and re-admission to his favour, consistent with the honour of his infinite justice and holiness.

In like manner, our great High Priest, laying aside his robes of light and majesty, appeared in the mean attire of our nature; and was made in "all things like "unto his brethren," except as he was free from the least defilement of sin: and, having on earth offered his one all-sufficient sacrifice, he ascended into heaven, to appear before the Mercy-seat, in the true sanctuary, in the immediate "presence of God, *for us;*" bearing our nature, and pleading in our behalf the merits of his perfect obedience and inestimable atonement; that we might be delivered from "going down into the "pit," through the "ransom" which he had paid in our behalf.* The apostle, writing to the Hebrews, discusses this subject very fully, and shows in how many and important particulars the Antitype exceeded, and consequently differed from, the Type. With lively and joyful gratitude he expatiates on the compassion, faithfulness, and power of our great High Priest; on his divine dignity, and his condescension in assuming our nature, and owning us as his brethren; on his sympathy with us in our sorrows and temptations; on the

* Job xxxiii. 24.

prevalency of his intercession, and the unchangeable nature of that office which he ever liveth to perform. He shows us, that, by the offering of his flesh, "the "way into the holiest is laid open," and that we may now draw near with boldness, through the rended veil, to the Mercy-seat of our reconciled God; that by the blood of the new covenant, "the heavenly things "themselves are purified;" (that is, they are not polluted by the admission of sinners to them in this appointed way;) and that "such a High Priest *became* "*us*," or suited our case, "who was holy, harmless, "undefiled, and separate from sinners." In another epistle, he grounds his defiance of all enemies, principally on this doctrine, that Christ "died, yea, rather "is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God; "where he also maketh intercession for us:"* And to another church he shows, that "through him both "Jews and Gentiles have access by one Spirit unto "the Father."† In like manner, John also thus instructs his Christian brethren, "If any man sin, we "have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the "righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; "and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the "whole world."‡ Many other testimonies to the same effect might be adduced: but these may suffice to our present purpose; except as we advert to our Lord's own words, when he says, "I am the Door; by me, "if any man enter in, he shall be saved;" and, "I am "the *Way*, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh

* Rom. viii. 33—39 † Eph. ii. 18.
‡ 1 John ii. 1, 2.

"to the Father, but by me:"* and to his prayer in behalf of his disciples just before his crucifixion, which may be considered as the specimen and substance of his intercession.† From these Scriptures we learn, that sinners are not admitted *in their own name*, even to a mercy-seat to supplicate pardon; but in the name and through the intercession of Christ: that their pleas must not be drawn from their own character, situation, or services; nor even from the general goodness and compassion of God; but wholly from the Person, work, and merits of Emmanuel; and that his pleas in their behalf are wholly deduced from what he hath done and suffered, in their nature and for their benefit.

It is not necessary or proper for us to imagine any outward transaction, which accords to a high-priest burning incense, to an advocate pleading a cause, or to a friend and brother making intercession. Heavenly things are represented to our minds under such emblems, to give us *true* ideas of their *nature*, not to convey to us *adequate* apprehensions of the *manner* of them. Thus Christ is represented as appearing in heaven, as a Lamb that had been slain, to instruct us in the reality and efficacy of his atonement; and his officiating as a Priest, or pleading as an Advocate, conveys important instruction and encouragement. Thence we may learn, that his interposition in our behalf, through the merits of his obedience unto death, renders our sinful persons and services accepted with the Father, and secures to us deliverance from every

* John x. 9. xiv. 6. † John xvii.

enemy and evil, the supply of every want, and the eternal enjoyment of all felicity. Further than this we need not determine: he and the Father are One, in essence, counsel, and will; and his mediation cannot but be effectual, in behalf of all who come to God through him. For it hath been repeatedly observed, (though opposers of these doctrines, either *wilfully* or *carelessly*, remain ignorant of it,) that the atonement and intercession of Christ were not intended to *induce God to show mercy;* but *to render the exercise of his love to sinners consistent with the honour of his law, and the glory of his name:* and this single proposition, well understood, suffices to prove whole volumes that have been published on the subject, to be an empty contest with an imaginary opponent, and a triumph for an ideal victory. Whilst our Lord, therefore, directed his disciples to ask in his name, and promised that he would pray the Father for them; he also subjoined in another place, "I say not, that I "will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself "loveth you; because ye have loved me, and have "believed that I came out from God."* His general plea, in behalf of "all who come to God through "him," suffices; nor is it necessary for the well-beloved Son of the Father to be particular, or to use importunity with him, to induce him to grant all covenanted blessings to his beloved children.

The intercession of Christ is, in its very nature, entirely different from the supplications which we make for one another. When we pray, according to

* John xiv. 13—17. xvi. 26, 27.

our duty, for our brethren and fellow sinners, our requests are admissible and acceptable only through his mediation. We do not come in our own name, we rest not our intercession on our own services, we make no claim to the mercy we ask, nor have any complete assurance that we shall prevail. If indeed our requests be duly presented, they will be accepted; and if they be not granted in the sense we meant them, they will return into our own bosom. But the intercession of Christ, for his disciples, is made in his own name, on the ground of his own merits and dignity, according to the covenant ratified with and by him, and with the absolute certainty of success.—This shows the sin and idolatry of worshipping, or coming to God through, other mediators: for either these were sinners, that were brought to heaven through the merits and intercession of Christ, though they are thus addressed as his competitors; or they are created angels, not at all related to us, and utterly destitute of every plea which they may urge in our behalf; having never been appointed to the mediatorial office, and never having thought of intruding into it. So that to worship saints and angels, even as intercessors, is an ascription, to servants and creatures, of that honour, which belongs to the only-begotten Son alone; and they, who thus dishonour "the Son, do not honour "the Father that sent him."

The intercession of Christ is presented in behalf of "all, who come to God through him," or "who "pray in his name;" and all men are invited to return in this way to the Lord; assured that Christ will not refuse to maintain the cause of any one, whatever

he hath been or is, who uprightly seeks the benefit of his mediation: there is however a sense, in which it is not *general*, but *particular*. If he intercede for those, who are now living without faith or prayer, or in the practice of sin; it will shortly appear by their repentance and conversion: for he never pleaded in behalf of those, who continue to the last unbelieving and ungodly, as the event shows.* His intercession, therefore, is intended to give us "this confidence, that, if "we ask any thing, according to the will of God, he "heareth us:"† but it can form no just ground of encouragement to those who do not pray at all; who come before God, not in the name of Jesus, but with other pleas; who ask such things as God hath not promised, or whose prayers are mere lip-labour and hypocrisy.

We are then instructed to approach the Father, through the mediation of the Son, for the forgiveness of our sins, the acceptance of our persons and services, and all things immediately connected with eternal salvation; and for all temporal benefits, as far as infinite wisdom sees them conducive to our real good. But especially we are encouraged in his name to pray for the Holy Spirit, to illuminate, renew, purify, comfort, and strengthen our souls; to furnish us with that measure of spiritual gifts which our situations require; and to support us under the trials to which we may be exposed. We also expect, that, through this heavenly Advocate, our prayers for our friends, our enemies, our brethren, or the church at large, will be

* John xvii. 9—20. † 1 John v. 14, 15.

[illegible] most desirable ma[illegible]
[illegible] and the impe[illegible]
[illegible] and thanksgi[illegible]
[illegible] pleasing to God;
[illegible] serve and honour
[illegible] merit condemnation,
[illegible] reward.
[illegible] not only appears
[illegible] as a merciful [illegible]
[illegible] KING; for he
[illegible] Melchizedek," a Ki[illegible]
[illegible] As a King he confers b[illegible]
[illegible] enacts laws, dem[illegible]
[illegible] and exercises autho[illegible]
[illegible] justice to the w[illegible]
[illegible] says he, "is g[illegible]
[illegible] earth."* "The an[illegible]
[illegible] his mighty ange[illegible]
[illegible] is at the right ha[illegible]
[illegible] powers being n[illegible]
[illegible] hath "set him a[illegible]
[illegible] places, far abov[illegible]
[illegible] right, and domi[illegible]
[illegible] not only in
[illegible] and hath
[illegible] him to be [illegible]
[illegible] is his b[illegible]
[illegible] all." "
[illegible] him,
[illegible]

men might honour him, even as they honour the ıther."*—The expressions *given* and *committed*, others of similar import, evidently relate to him, ſan and Mediator, and in no respect deduct from energy of this language of the Holy Spirit: for must he be *originally*, who can *receive in his ɡated character* such authority, and exercise such ers? What creature could sustain the weight of dominion, which rests on the shoulders of him, ı was a "Child born, and a Son given unto us?"† doubt he, of whom such things are spoken, is ıe mighty God," "the Lord from heaven," "God ıanifest in the flesh." That one, *truly man*, should rcise absolute authority over all angels, who serve in ministering to his redeemed people; that he ıld have "the keys of death and the unseen orld;"‡ and that the universal kingdom of nature providence should be administered by him, is a ıt surprising mystery: but that all this should be ıubserve the good of such worthless creatures as are, is most stupendous and inconceivable love! d they must have very high thoughts of human ure, or very low apprehensions of the infinite God, o can suppose a mere man to be capable of such -eminent dignity and authority.

It is a firm ground of admiring and thankful exul- on, that he, who is our Brother and Friend, thus es all worlds with absolute sway, as "King of kings, ınd Lord of lords." The rise, fall, and revolutions

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* John v. 21—27. Rom. xiv. 10—12. 2 Thess. i. 7—10.
† Is. ix. 6, 7. ‡ Rev. i. 18.

ess; and "from his fulness all his people receive."* He governs all events in that manner, which may best romote the safety and happiness of his church, and of rue believers. Therefore "all things work together 'for good to them that love God." None "can pluck 'any of them out of his hands;"† "No weapon form-'ed against them shall prosper." "Nothing shall se-'parate them from the love of God." "Jehovah is 'their Shepherd; they shall not want." Tribulations, emptations, persecutions, conflicts, yea, death itself, re instruments in the hands of Christ, to prepare them or "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and 'in all things they will be made more than conquer-'ors," until they are enriched with everlasting felici-y.—But this power is equally formidable to obstinate nbelievers: all, who will not have Christ to reign ver them, will be destroyed as his enemies: no refuge n be found from his intolerable indignation, no re-stance made to his omnipotent word.

This kingdom shall endure through all ages, to the d of time: then his power will raise the dead. He ill "judge the world in righteousness," and decide e eternal state of all mankind: and thus the design f his delegated authority being completely answered, e will, as Mediator, deliver up "the kingdom to God, even the Father;" the *absolute* dominion of e Creator will be re-established, and "God will be all in all."

It scarcely needs be observed, that the authority,

* Is. xi. 2—5. John i. 16. iii. 34. Col. ii. 3, 9.

† John x. 27, 30.

protection, and munificence of our glorious King demand of us implicit and unreserved obedience. The faith, that welcomes his salvation, "worketh by love," and ensures a cheerful attention to his commands: all the precepts of Scripture are either the mandates of Christ our King, to those who share the blessings of his peaceful rule; or they constitute that law which is "the ministration of death" and condemnation. Though his commands coincide with the moral law, yet they are modified differently as addressed to sinners who seek salvation by him. The commands to repent, to believe, to pray, to observe his ordinances, and to love the brethren, are indeed virtually contained in the comprehensive requirement of supreme love to God, and the love of our neighbour as of ourselves: yet they are given to sinners only through Christ and the gospel; and those alone are his true subjects, who submit to his authority, and, from evangelical principles, uprightly endeavour to obey his commandments.*

We must likewise consider the ascended Redeemer, as the great Prophet of his Church. He indeed *personally* performed the prophetical office on earth, only during his humiliation: but, as all the ancient Prophets were his servants and representatives; so, the apostles, evangelists, and penmen of the New Testament were his delegates; and so are all those who preach according to the holy Scriptures. Christ is the great Teacher of mankind: the whole revelation of God is imparted to him: he is the Word and Wisdom

* Matt. vii. 21—28. John xiv. 21—23. xv. 14.

of the Father, and "the Light of the world:" all who follow him have "the light of life," all others abide in darkness. Divine truth is reposited in him as in a store-house, for our benefit; thence it is communicated to us through the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit was sent forth from him, to inspire prophets, apostles, and evangelists; and he still furnishes pastors and teachers for their work; for these are the "gifts" of the ascended Redeemer to rebellious men.* Moreover, the same Spirit prepares men's minds to receive the truth in faith, and love, and to understand its nature, glory, and tendency: thus he gives efficacy to the word, and applies his salvation to our souls.† So that the Lord Jesus, as ascended on high, is the sole Prophet of the church, and teaches his people, by his word, by faithful ministers, and by his Holy Spirit. They, therefore, who, with a humble, teachable, believing, and obedient disposition, seek from him the knowledge of God, and of his truth and will, in the use of his appointed means, will be made wise to salvation; preserved, in proportion to the simplicity of their dependence, from errors and delusions; guided "in the midst of the paths of judgment;" and instructed how to act as circumstances may require, with discretion and propriety. But the self-wise of every description, and all who refuse to receive instruction from Christ, will be entangled in error, and given over to strong delusion, whatever their talents, opportunities, attainments, reputation, or assiduity may be. And even believers will be left to fall into distressing

* Eph. iv. 8—16. † Matt. xiii. 11—15.

mistakes, if at any time they "lean to their own understanding," neglect to seek wisdom from this great Counsellor, or prefer the opinion of some favourite teacher to the word of him who is the truth itself.

These distinct offices of our glorified Lord cannot be separated, either in respect of his performance of them, or of our dependence on him. The self-righteous and the self-wise may seem willing to own him as their King; whilst the one rejects him as a Prophet, and both of them refuse to come to God through him as their High Priest: on the other hand, the antinomian may seem to rely on him as a Priest, whilst he determines that "he will not have him to reign over him." But these and similar dependences are mere delusions: for Christ rules as a Priest on his throne: he intercedes with regal authority, and he teaches his disciples to rely on his atonement and advocacy, to shelter their souls under his omnipotent protection, and to submit to his sovereign rule. He reveals as a Prophet, what he purchased as a High Priest, and confers as a munificent Prince. The obedience, which he requires of his subjects, he by his grace disposes and enables them to perform, and renders it accepted through his intercession. So that they, who truly receive him in one of these combined offices, receive him in them all.

In this manner our Lord prepares the souls of his people for the inheritance which he hath prepared for them; nor could any one of these distinct parts of his mediatorial undertaking, apart from the others, by its utmost efficacy accomplish that gracious purpose. His

rifice and intercession, indeed, render it consistent th the glory of God, to admit us sinners into his esence, to receive us to his favour, to make us his ildren, and to give us an inheritance in his own holy bitation: but how should we profit by this provision, l he not send forth his word and his ministers to pro- im the glad tidings, to give the invitations, and to t before us his precious promises and new covenant- gagements? How can we receive the advantage en of this revelation, without we understand and be- ve it? or how shall we credit such a humbling spi- ual message, except the eyes of our minds be open- by the Holy Spirit?* How could we unholy crea- res be made meet for this holy inheritance, without e influences of his new-creating Spirit? How could e overcome the powers of darkness, and all our ene- ies, if he did not fight for us? How could we meet e king of terrors, if he did not engage to support d deliver us; and finally to raise our bodies, incor- ptible, immortal, and glorious, to unite with our uls in the everlasting enjoyment of the love of our conciled God and Father?

We indeed may consider Christ as our Shepherd d Physician, or in many other characters illustrative our dependence on him and obligations to him: yet ey may all with propriety be referred to the offices Prophet, Priest, and King, according to the *old* and *riptural* distinction. These are comprised in his ti- e, CHRIST, the MESSIAH, the ANOINTED of GOD; prophets, priests, and kings were anointed under e typical dispensation of the Old Testament.†

* 1 Cor. ii. 12—14.

† Lev. viii. 12. 1 Sam. x. 1. xvi. 13. 1 Kings xix. 16.

Is this then our creed, our experience, and our dependence? Do we thus receive and rely on CHRIST our Prophet, Priest, and King? and do we, in the patient obedience of faith and love, "wait for the mercy "of our Lord JESUS CHRIST unto eternal life?"* Our answer to these enquiries, as in the presence of our heart-searching Judge, is of infinite importance; for this, and this only, is genuine Christianity.

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* Jude 20, 21.

ESSAY XI.

On Justification.

L things having been made ready for the salva-
of sinners, in the person and mediation of the
Redeemer: it was also necessary, that the me-
or *medium*, of appropriating this inestimable be-
should be clearly and expressly revealed: and
eads us to the consideration of the scriptural
ne of Justification. I shall therefore, in the pre-
Essay, briefly explain the meaning of the words
y and *justification*, as they are used by the sa-
vriters;—show that we must be justified before
by faith alone;—consider the peculiar nature of
and the manner in which it justifies;—assign a
asons why justification and salvation are ascrib-
faith, rather than to any other holy dispositions
ons;—and answer some of the more plausible
ions to the doctrine.

: terms *justify* and *justification* are taken from
mmon concerns of life; and they are applied,
ome necessary variation of meaning, to the deal-
f God with his rational creatures; especially to
nission of sinful men into a state of acceptance,

and to the privilege of being thus accepted. They denote therefore, that such persons are now dealt with, as if they were *righteous;* being wholly exempted from those sufferings which are strictly speaking *penal*, and entitled to the reward of perfect obedience: though in themselves they have merited no reward, but, on the contrary have deserved the punishment denounced in the law against transgressors.—These are commonly said to be *forensick* terms; that is, they refer to the practice of courts of justice among men; and indeed they seem to have been originally taken from such transactions: yet this derivation gives us a very inadequate idea of their import. For when a man is charged with a crime before an earthly tribunal, he must be either *condemned* or *acquitted:* if he be condemned, he may be *pardoned*, but he cannot be *justified;* if he be acquitted, he may be *justified*, but he cannot stand in need of *pardon*. Moreover, a criminal may be *acquitted* for want of legal evidence, or from other causes, when there can be no reasonable doubt of his guilt: yet no accusation for the same crime can be brought against him; though he is very far from being fully *justified*, or admitted to the full enjoyment of those privileges which belong to an unsuspected member of civil society; nor would he be a proper person to be confided in, or advanced to a place of honour and responsibility. Whereas, if an accused person be fully *justified* from the charge brought against him; he suffers no degradation in his character, or disadvantage in his circumstances; his integrity is often placed in a more conspicuous light than before; he is considered as an injured man, and is fre-

ly recommended by these circumstances to the
r and confidence of the prince, or of the people.
fication therefore, in the original meaning of the
, is not only distinct from *pardon*, but is abso-
incompatible with it: it implies far more than
equittal of an accused person: it is a declaration,
no charge ought to have been made against the
that he is justly entitled to all the privileges of a
citizen; and that he is, and ought to be, admissi-
every post of honour and emolument, even as
had never been accused. The meaning of the
in other concerns of life, is the same; if a man's
cter has been aspersed, he is said to be com-
y *justified*, when the charge is entirely refuted,
roved malicious or groundless, to the satisfaction
who enquire into it.

the contrary, our justification before God is al-
connected with pardon, and implies that we are
: and we are justified as *ungodly*, "righteousness
imputed" to us without works." *If we had never
d, we might have been *justified* before God by our
obedience, according to the common use of the
justification: no charge could have been brought
oved against us, nor should we have needed any
eness. But by breaking the holy law of God,
ave forfeited our title to the reward of righteous-
according to the law, and have incurred the pe-
of eternal misery. *The justification* therefore *of
ner* must imply something distinct from a total
inal remission of the deserved punishment; namely,

* Rom. iv. 1—8.

a renewed title to the reward of righteousness, as complete and effective as he would have had if he had never sinned, but had perfectly performed, during the term of his probation, all the demands of the divine law. The remission of sins would indeed place him in such a state, that no charge would lie against him: but then he would have no title to the reward of righteousness, till he had obtained it by performing, for the appointed time, the whole obedience required of him; for he would merely be re-admitted to a state of probation, and his justification or condemnation could not be decided till that were terminated. But the *justification* of the pardoned sinner gives him a *present* title to the reward of righteousness, independent of his *future* conduct, as well as without respect to his *past* actions. This is evidently the scriptural idea of justification: it is uniformly represented as immediate and complete, when the sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ; and not as a contingent advantage, to be waited for till death or judgment: and the arguments, which some learned men have adduced, to prove that *justification* means nothing else than *forgiveness of sins*, only show that the two distinct blessings are never separately conferred. David, for instance, says, "Blessed is the man, to whom the Lord imputeth "not iniquity;"* and Paul observes, that, in that passage, "David describeth the blessedness of the man, "unto whom God imputeth righteousness without "works."† This does not prove, that "not imputing "sin," and "imputing righteousness," are synoni-

* Ps. xxxii. 2. † Rom. iv. 6.

ous terms: but merely, that where God *does not im-*
te sin he does impute righteousness; and that he con-
s the title to eternal life, on all those whom he res-
es from eternal death.* Indeed *exemption from*
rnal punishment, and *a right to an actual and vast*
ward, are such distinct things, that one cannot but
onder they should be so generally confounded as
ey are, in theological discussions.—In the Scrip-
res, however, *justification* undoubtedly signifies that
od hath given the sinner a right and title to eternal
e, accounting him *righteous* by an act of sovereign
ace; so that "there is no condemnation for him;" but
ing thus justified, "he is made an heir, according
to the hope of eternal life."†

Every attentive reader of the Scriptures, especially
those epistles which contain the last and fullest re-
lation of the truth and will of God to mankind,
ust observe in them an uniform declaration made,
d strenuously insisted on, as of the greatest impor-
nce, that "a man is justified by faith without the
deeds of the law." Many learned men have endea-
oured to explain all these testimonies of the *Mosaick*
w, as distinguished from the Christian dispensation;
d to confine the meaning of them principally to the
rogated ceremonies. But, is "knowledge of sin"
y the *ceremonial*, or by the *moral* law? Was the ce-
monial law "the ministration of death, written and
engraven in stones?"‡ Did the apostle "know this
law to be *spiritual*," "holy, just, and good?" Did
he delight in it after the inner man?" Did the Mo-

* Acts xiii. 38, 39. † Tit. iii. 1—7. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 7.

saick rites, or the *tenth commandment*, convince him that concupiscence was a sin, and slay his hope of justification by the law?* Did Christ redeem us from the curse of the ceremonial law alone, by being made a curse for us?†—Such questions might easily be multiplied; and each of them formed into a regular argument, demonstrating the falsehood and absurdity of this opinion: but the compass of this Essay does not admit of it, nor is it necessary in so plain a case. No law in the universe can both *justify* and *condemn* the same person: if then no man hath always "loved God "with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself," no man can be justified according to the works of the moral law, for this most obvious and conclusive reason, *because all are exposed to condemnation for breaking it.* If no human action be more excellent than the law requires; then none of our works of righteousness can do any thing to reverse the condemnation that our sins have incurred: and if the best of our good works come short of perfection, and our best days are chequered with many sins; then we must continue to accumulate guilt and condemnation, as long as we remain under the law, and are judged according to it. So that by no works of any law whatever, can a transgressor of *that law* be justified in the sight of God.

These considerations may prepare our minds for attending more carefully to the language of the apostle, in discoursing on this subject. He constantly insists upon it, that a man is justified *by*, or *through*,

* Rom. vii. † Gal. iii. 13.

faith, and not by the deeds of the law. He even says without hesitation, "To him that worketh not, but "believeth in him that *justifieth the ungodly*, his faith "is counted to him for righteousness."* And he carefully distinguishes this way of justification from that by works; nay, opposes the one to the other as incompatible.—"Because the law worketh wrath;— "therefore it is by faith, that it might be by grace." "And if by grace, then it is no more of works; "otherwise grace is no more grace."†—For this reason, all they whom God justifieth are considered as *ungodly*. True faith is indeed the effect of regeneration, an important part of true *godliness*, and inseparable from all other holy exercises of the soul towards God: yet the believer, considered as *he is in himself, according to the holy law*, is liable to condemnation as *ungodly;* and is justified solely and entirely, as *viewed in Christ, according to the gospel.*

Even James who in another sense shows that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only," illustrates his doctrine by the example of Abraham, who was "justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar:" and he then adds, Seest thou, how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness."‡ Now these words were spoken many years before Abraham was called to sacrifice Isaac, indeed, before Isaac was

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* Rom. iv. 5. † Rom. iv. 14—16. xi. 6. ‡ James ii. 20—26.

born.* James therefore evidently meant, that the true believer proves his profession to be sincere and his faith living, by the fruits of holy obedience; and is thus justified before men on earth, and will be justified before the world at the last day, from that charge of hypocrisy, which will be substantiated against those who "say they have faith, and have not works." Unless we admit this interpretation we shall find as much difficulty in reconciling James with himself, as some have done in reconciling Paul with him. For he adduces the same example, and quotes the same Scripture, in illustration of his point, that St. Paul does: and he supposed, that he had confirmed the true doctrine of justification by faith, in thus distinguishing living from dead faith; and in showing that no faith could justify a man *before God*, which did not prove itself genuine, and justify the possessor *before his neighbours*, by influencing him to the practice of good works according to the opportunity afforded him.

But the general doctrine, that, 'a man is justified 'in the sight of God by faith alone,' is too plain to need much proof. They who regard the epistles of St. Paul must know, that he not only teaches this doctrine, but likewise bestows much pains in establishing it by various arguments, illustrations, and examples. He declares that "no man is justified in any other "way:"† that "they, who seek righteousness, as it "were, by the works of the law," stumble and fall,‡

* Gen. xv. 6. † Gal. ii. 11, 12. ‡ Rom. ix. 30—33. x. 3—11.

l receive no benefit from Christ and the gospel;* l that "if any man, or angel, should preach any other gospel he would be accursed."† Indeed those riptures, which do not immediately relate to justifi- ion, continually speak of faith as the grand distin- ishing difference, between them who are saved, and m that perish. In this way the apostle evidently ches us, that all the accepted servants of God un- r the Old Testament were justified by faith.‡ And e same is certainly implied, when he says, "They that be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham; for as many as are of the works of the law are un- der the curse."§

The texts, containing propositions to this effect, are re numerous than can easily be conceived, by per- s who have not particularly examined the subject; may readily be seen by looking over, in a good ncordance, the articles *faith*, *believe*, *believing*. *By th* we pass from death unto life: *by faith* we are ed, we walk, we stand, we work, we fight, and nquer; we come unto God, we receive the Spirit, d we are sanctified, *by faith:* all things pertaining to r peace, stability, fruitfulness, comfort, and eternal icity, are evidently suspended on our faith, and in- parably connected with it, in a peculiar manner, and olly different from the relation which they bear to y other holy disposition, or act of obedience. So t, it is really surprising, that any, except avowed fidels or scepticks, should *deny* the doctrine of jus-

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* Gal. v. 2—6. † Gal. i. 8—10.
‡ Heb. x. 38, 39. xi. § Gal. iii. 8—14.

tification by faith alone, whatever interpretation the may adopt of the words *faith* and *justification.*

I shall therefore next proceed to consider *the distinguishing nature and effects of faith, and the manner in which it justifies.* Some opposers of this fundamental doctrine attempt to explain it away, by representing faith as a compendious term, denoting the whole of that profession and obedience which Christ requires of his disciples: so that they suppose, we are justified by embracing and obeying the gospel, as a mitigated law of works; and that Christ purchased for us the acceptance of *sincere*, instead of *perfect*, obedience. Their definition of faith comprises in it repentance, love, and obedience; and on this plan it would at least be equally proper to say, that we are justified by our love and its fruits, as by our faith, if any distinction were admitted. But how different is this to the language of the sacred oracles! Surely in this case we should be justified by "works of righteousness that "we had done," though not by "the works of the "law." It has not, however, yet been shown in what part of the New Testament this *mitigated law* may be found: for certainly nothing like it is contained in our Lord's sermon on the mount, or in the preceptive part of the apostolical epistles. Neither are we told precisely what it requires, or what exact measure of obedience will justify a man according to it. It is not easy on this plan to understand in what sense Christ "magnified the law and made it honourable;" how "the law is established by faith;" for which of our sins the death of Christ atoned; (seeing the moral law is repealed, and a milder law given, by obedience to

ich we are justified;) or how boasting can be ex-
ded. In fact, this absurd sentiment totally makes
d "the holy, just, and good law" of God; and
:rs the standard of our duty, from the exact re-
irements of the spiritual precept, to a vague inde-
minate idea called *sincere obedience*, which may be
delled and varied according to the reasonings and
linations of mankind: and thus it virtually sets
le both the law and the gospel. But as faith, *in re-
ct of justification*, is not only opposed to the works
the law, but distinguished from repentance, hope,
l charity, as exercised by believers; and as none of
se, nor any kind or degree of obedience is ever
l to justify a man in the sight of God; so we are
:ranted to decide without hesitation, that the apos-
: never meant by faith, such a compound of all the
tinct parts of Christianity; and that this supposi-
ı would imply, that they used the most unsuitable
l obscure expressions which could possibly have
:n devised. True faith, no doubt, is inseparably
nected with, or produces all the other essential
ts of Christianity: and in like manner, a complete
nan body has ears, hands, and feet, as well as eyes;
the eyes alone are capable of seeing. Thus, the
: produces the fruit, yet is distinct from it; and the
n or branches of the tree may answer purposes,
which the fruit, though valuable, is totally unfit.
s, therefore, a very different thing to say, that living
h is *connected* with repentance, *works* by love, and
duces obedience; than to contend, that it *includes*
m, and that we are justified by repentance, love,
l obedience, as parts of our faith.

Others again suppose, that faith is nothing more than *an assent to the truth of Christianity:* and that a Jew or Gentile, on embracing and professing the gospel, was delivered from the guilt of his former sins; that being thus brought into a justified state, he would continue in it, or fall from it, according to his subsequent behaviour; and that his justification at the last day must be by his own works, if he escape final condemnation. But here again we enquire, how this system can consist with the very meaning of the word *justify*, or *account righteous*, when the sinner is merely put upon a new probation to work out a righteousness for himself? How it consists with believers "not "coming into condemnation," and "*having* eternal "life?" How it excludes boasting? And where it is found in the sacred oracles?—In fact, *the dead faith* exploded by James, is here brought forward for the sinner's *first justification;* whilst *the dead works* of a mere formalist are generally meant by the obedience which is at last to justify such a believer: so that the sentiment verges on the one hand to an antinomian abuse of the gospel, and on the other to a pharisaical rejection of it.

Let us then hear the words of the inspired apostle on this subject. "Therefore by the deeds of the law, "shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God; for "by the law is the knowledge of sin.—But now the "righteousness of God without the law is manifested, "being witnessed by the law and the prophets: even "the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ "unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is "no difference, for all have sinned and come short of

"the glory of God: Being justified freely by his grace "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* What does he mean by "the righteousness of God "without the law, which was witnessed by the law "and the prophets;" and which is "unto all, and "upon all, them that believe?" He elsewhere says that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness "unto every one that believeth."† His obedience unto death, as Emmanuel, "God manifest in the flesh," in our nature,, as our Surety, and in order to "bring "in an everlasting righteousness," was infinitely valuable; and honoured the law of God more than the perfect obedience of all creatures ever could have done. It was predicted and prefigured in the law of Moses, and the prophets expressly testified it. "Sure-"ly, shall one say, in Jehovah have I righteousness "and strength." "In Jehovah shall all the seed of "Israel be *justified*, and shall glory." "This is the "name, whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR "RIGHTEOUSNESS."‡ Can we then doubt the apostle's meaning in the before-cited passage? This "righteousness of God is without the law," being entirely independent of our personal obedience, either before or after justification: it becomes ours "by "faith in Christ Jesus;" and in the next chapter we read of "righteousness *imputed* without works."§ Is it not then plain that "the righteousness of God is "*unto all* that believe," by *imputation?* Thus likewise it is "*upon all* that believe:"—for they "have

* Rom. iii. 19—24. † Rom. x. 4.
‡ Is. xlv. 24, 25. Jer. xxiii. 6. § Rom. iv. 6.

" put on Christ."*—' God now looking on them, ' there appears nothing but Christ; they are as it were ' covered all over with him, as a man with the clothes ' he hath put on. Hence in the next verse it is said, ' they " are all one in Christ Jesus," as if there were ' but one person.' These are the words in which Mr. LOCKE delivers his exposition of this text.

As our sins were imputed to Christ, and he endured the curse we deserved; so his righteousness is imputed to us, if believers, and becomes our title to the heavenly inheritance. " He was made sin for us who " knew no sin: that we might be made the righteous- " ness of God in him."† The grand design of this stupendous plan is declared to be, that " God might " be just, and the *Justifier* of him that believeth in " Jesus;" while " to him that *worketh* not, but be- " lieveth in him that justifieth the *ungodly*, his faith " is *counted* for righteousness."‡ In this respect, " there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come " short of the glory of God;" Nor can any man in the world be justified before him, except he receive the righteousness of God by faith.

But what then is faith? To answer this question, I would observe, that *faith*, or *believing*, in common language implies credit given to a report, testimony, or promise; or confidence placed in any person: and almost all the affairs of life are conducted on this principle, that men in ordinary circumstances are entitled to a measure of credit and confidence. But "if " we receive the witness of men, the witness of God

* Gal. iii. 27. † 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡ Rom. iii. 25—31. iv. 5.

"is greater."* "The testimony of the Lord, is sure, "making wise the simple."† Divine faith is, therefore, *a disposition readily to receive the testimony, and to rely on the promises, of God.* The apostle Paul briefly calls it "the belief of the truth,"‡ of every revealed truth, and especially of "the word of the truth "of the gospel:" and he represents faith as "the sub-"stance of things hoped for, the evidence of things "not seen."‖ In general, faith gives implicit credit to the divine veracity, in respect of all the visible things that God hath attested; some of which are past, as the creation, the fall of man, the deluge, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ; others exist at present, as the all-pervading providence and all-seeing eye of God, and the intercession of Christ in heaven; and others are future, as the coming of Christ to raise the dead and judge the world, and the state of eternal retributions. Now faith credits them all; and so receives the testimony of God, both respecting the evil and the good, that it realizes them to the mind, as if they were indeed perceptible by the bodily senses. But *in its more particular exercise*, it especially regards, embraces, realizes, and looks for, the future blessings which God hath promised; and thus gives the soul, as it were a present possession of "things hoped for." The examples, recorded in the chapter last referred to, evince, that this faith always receives the divine testimony, not only as *true*, but as *interesting* in the highest degree: and thus, as a living principle, it influences a man to flee from, or provide against, the threatened

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* 1 John v. 9. † Ps. xix. 7. ‡ 2 Thess. ii. 12, 13. ‖ Heb. xi. 1.

evil, and to pursue with earnestness and decision the promised good.

The record which God hath given us of his Son, and of eternal life in him, is the centre of revelation: faith therefore always pays a peculiar regard to *it*, and thus especially "sets to its seal that God is true;" whilst unbelief makes him a liar. Other divine testimonies having shown a man that he is a lost sinner, deserving the wrath of God, and exposed to it; these discover to him his only refuge. The Holy Spirit, through the "belief of the truth," has "convinced "him of sin:" and now "He glorifies Christ," and shows to the sinner's enlightened mind the nature, suitableness, and value of his salvation, as revealed in the word of the gospel. The Father, as it were, says to him "This is my beloved Son,—hear him:" and his heart answers, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine "unbelief." He credits the testimony of God concerning the Person and mediation of Emmanuel; he feels his need of the teaching of such a Prophet; of the deliverance and protection of such a King, and the blessings of his kingdom; and, above all, of the sacrifice, merits, and intercession of this great High Priest. Faith in the divine testimony and promises influences him to entrust his soul and all his eternal interests into the hands of Christ, relying on his power, truth, and love: he comes to the Father through him and in his name: he shelters his soul from the wrath of God and the curse of the law, under the protection of his atoning blood: he confides in his power and grace to deliver him from all his outward and inward foes: he sits at the Redeemer's feet, to hear and observe his direc-

tions: he lives by faith in him for every thing: and this faith working by love, and learning daily lessons from his word and from the cross, gives him the victory over the fear of man and the love of the world, increases his humiliation and hatred of sin, and furnishes him with motives, encouragements, and assistance for all holy obedience.

But, whatever faith may effect as the active principle of a man's conduct, it *justifies him* before God, only as it receives Christ Jesus, and applies to him for salvation; as it constitutes the sinner's relation to him, and interests the soul in his righteousness and atonement, and in all the promises of the new covenant. The operation and effects of this "precious "faith," serve to distinguish it from a worthless dead faith, but do nothing towards our *justification:* for we are justified, as one with Christ; on which account it is meet that we should share his purchased blessings; whilst he, who is destitute of faith, stands in no such relation to him, and is not entitled to such distinguished advantages. Yet all who have this faith do repent, do love the Lord and his people, and uprightly obey his commands; and by this they are distinguished from mere professors.

We must not then suppose, that we are justified by the *merit* of our faith, any more than by that of our good works: for though true faith is pleasing to God, because honourable to his name; yet it cannot atone for sin, or purchase heaven: nay, the imperfection of our faith would condemn us, if we were to be judged according to the *merit* of it. But we are 'justified by 'faith alone,' because by it alone we receive, and be-

come interested in, that righteousness in which we are accepted with God. This "righteousness of God," having been devised, appointed, wrought out, and revealed, for this very purpose, is fully sufficient to justify all who are interested in it, however multiplied and aggravated their sins have been.

Hence it is that St. Paul uses such decisive language on this subject: "What things were gain to "me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless "and I count all things but loss for the excellency of "the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count "them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be "*found in him;* not having mine own righteousness, "which is of the law, but that which is of the faith "of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by "faith."*

It appears therefore, that free grace (or the gratuitous favour, sovereign love, or everlasting mercy of God,) is the *source* of our justification; that the righteousness and atonement of Emmanuel are the *meritorious cause* of it; and that faith is the only *recipient* of the blessing: and we are "justified *by his blood,*"† because by shedding his blood he completed his obedience, as our Surety. Justification may therefore be ascribed, either to the *source*, to the *meritorious cause*, or to the *recipient* of it: even as, (to use a very familiar illustration,) a drowning person may be said to be saved, either by a man on the bank of the river, or by the rope thrown out to him, or by his hand laying

* Phil. iii. 3—9. † Rom. v. 9.

l on the rope; according to the different ways in ch we consider the subject.

The *manner*, in which faith justifies, may be illus- ed, by considering in what sense a bank-note pays :mand made on any person. The intrinsick value he paper is not, perhaps, one farthing: but it refers creditor to a company who are engaged and com- :nt to answer the demand: and therefore it is ac- nted to the debtor as so much paid in silver or l. Thus faith refers God the Father to Christ, who ble and willing to answer for every believer; and efore " it is imputed to us for righteousness." So :, if a man should die immediately after the first rcise of true faith, (as the thief on the cross did,) before he had time to perform one farther act of dience; he would directly enter heaven as a justi- person: though all, who are spared, will certainly w their faith by their works. Nor can there be a ıbt, but that the faith of Abraham and that of an- ıt believers, had a similar respect to the promises l testimony of God, concerning a Redeemer who s to come, or that it justified them in exactly the ıe manner.

The scriptures inform us, that " the only wise God ur Saviour" hath appointed this method of justifi- on, that the benefit *might be of grace:* for faith, of t nature which has been described, expressly re- ınces all claim in *the way of merit.* It allows, that y the works of the law no flesh can be justified ı the sight of God;" it comes to him, not to buy, :arn, or to demand a recompence, but to implore rcy, the " gift of righteousness," and " the gift of

" eternal life through Jesus Christ;" and in tha
by which the desert of sin and the justice of G
most clearly displayed to the universe. So that
method of "justifying the ungodly" by faith
the whole glory is secured to the Lord; and his ju
holiness, truth, and wisdom, as well as his abou
grace, are explicitly acknowledged and hon
And, as faith itself is the gift of God; whil
weakest faith justifies as certainly as the stro
(though it does not bring such evidence of it
conscience) so, boasting is excluded, every g
of self-preference is removed, and a foundation
it were, laid in the believer's heart, for the consta
ercise of humility, dependence, patience, and
ness; and of that love, which constrains the rede
sinner to "live no longer to himself, but to hin
" died for him and rose again."

But it may be objected, that the Scriptures freq
ly speak of repentance, conversion, love, obed
doing the will of God, and forgiveness of enemi
requisite in order to our acceptance and admiss
the enjoyment of our heavenly inheritance: and
can this consist with the doctrine of justificati
faith *alone?* No doubt these things are necessary
there is no salvation without them, according t
time and opportunity afforded; nor does any man
short of salvation in whom they are found. The
" things which accompany salvation;"* they
prepare the heart for receiving Christ by faith, or

* Heb. vi. 9. 2 Pet. i. 5—11.

ire evidences that he is thus received: yet Christ himelf is our whole Salvation, and faith alone receives im and appropriates the blessing; not *by believing vithout evidence that* Christ's *is ours;* but *by applying o him, according to the word of* God, *that he may be urs.*

Should it be further objected, that the decision of he day of judgment is always stated to be made "ac- "cording to men's works:" it may suffice to answer in this place, that no faith justifies, except that which works by love; that love uniformly produces obedience; and that the works thus wrought will certainly be adduced, as evidences in court, to distinguish between the true believer and all other persons.—Finally, the objection, that this doctrine tends to licentiousness, seems to have been already sufficiently answered, by the explanation given of the nature and effects of saving faith; and I shall only add a most earnest exhortation to all, who hold the doctrine, to walk so circumspectly, "that whereas men speak evil of them, "as evil doers; they may be ashamed, that falsely ac- "cuse their good conversation in Christ."*

Thus having explained the doctrine of *justification by faith* alone "through the righteousness of God, "even of our Saviour Jesus Christ;"† and proved it to be that of the Holy Scriptures; I would conclude by reminding the reader of its vast importance.—"How "should man be just with God?"—All our eternal interests depend on the answer, which, in our creed

* 1 Pet. ii. 12. iii. 16. † 2 Pet. i. 1.

and experience, we return to this question: for i
hath, for the glory of his own name, law, and g
ment, appointed a method of justifying sinner
revealed it in the gospel; and they, in the pride o
hearts, refuse to seek the blessing in this wa
will come for it according to their own devic
may justly, and will certainly, leave them unde
rited condemnation.* May God incline every re
give this subject a serious consideration, with t
of judgment and eternity before his eyes!—No
be forgotten, that all the Reformers from p
(who were eminent men, however some m
fect to despise them,) deemed the prevailing
ments concerning the way of a sinner's justifi
before God, to be the grand distinction betw
standing and a *falling* church.

Yet we should also observe, that "the truth"
may be "held in unrighteousness:" and they w
ceive this doctrine into a proud and carnal heart
dead faith, awfully deceive themselves, and quie
consciences in an impenitent unjustified state
likewise bring a reproach upon the truth, and
prejudice the minds of men against it, of whicl
will have a dreadful account to give at the las
For did all, who profess, and argue for this "dc
"of GOD our Saviour," adorn it by such a co
as it is suited to produce; Pharisees, sceptics, a
fidels, would be deprived of their best weapon
must fight against the gospel at a vast disadva

* Rom. x. 1—4.

y the LORD give us all that "faith which worketh y love," that "by works our faith may be made erfect;" as the grafted tree is in its most perfect e, when every branch is loaded with valuable t.*

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* Gal. v. 6. James ii. 17—26.

ESSAY XII.

On Regeneration.

WHEN the apostle had reminded the Ephesians, that "they were saved *by grace, through faith;*" he added, "and that not of yourselves; *it is the gift of* "*God.* Not of Works, lest any man should boast."* Hence we learn, that *faith* itself, the sole recipient of all the blessings of salvation, is the effect of a divine influence upon the soul; that all real good works are the effect of a new creation; and that it is the Lord's express design, by these means effectually to exclude *boasting*, "that no flesh should glory in his pre-"sence." This gracious operation of a divine power in changing the heart is represented in Scripture under several metaphors, of which *Regeneration*, (or being "born again," "born of God," and "born "of the Spirit,") is the most frequent and remarkable; and the present Essay will be appropriated to the discussion of this interesting subject.

* Eph. ii. 8—10.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a Scribe, and a member of the Jewish sanhedrim, came to our Lord by night: for, notwithstanding his conviction that Jesus was a Teacher sent from God, he was probably afraid or ashamed of being known to consult him, concerning the doctrine that he came to inculcate. The state of his mind accorded to the darkness which prevailed at the season of this interview; and he seems to have expected some instructions coincident with the traditions of the Pharisees, and their ideas of religion and of the Messiah's kingdom, which they supposed to consist in external forms and advantages. But our Lord, with a two-fold most solemn asseveration, used by none besides himself, and by him only on the most important occasions, abruptly assured him, that "Except a man were born again, he could not *see* the "kingdom of God;" or *discern* its real nature and excellency. And, when Nicodemus expressed his astonishment at this assertion, in language aptly illustrating the apostle's meaning, where he says "The "things of the spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man;"* our Lord answered with the same solemnity, that "Except a man were born of water "and of the Spirit, he could not *enter into* the kingdom of God." Water had been used in divers ways, as an external emblem of internal purification; and the use of it was to be continued, in the ordinance of baptism, under the new dispensation: it was therefore proper to mention it as the outward sign of that change, which could only be effected by the power

* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

of the Holy Spirit.—Our Lord next showed the indispensable necessity of this new birth. "That which "is born of the flesh," or derived by natural generation from fallen Adam, "is flesh," or carnal in its propensities and inclinations: "and that which is born "of the Spirit is spirit," or spiritual, holy, and heavenly, like its divine author.* He then told Nicodemus not to wonder at his declaration, that even Jews, Pharisees, and Scribes, "must be born again;" and he illustrated the subject by the wind, the precise *cause* of which, in all its variations, cannot easily be ascertained, nor its emotions and energy altered or abated; but which is very manifest in its powerful *effects*. And when Nicodemus still enquired "how "these things could be?" he in return expressed his surprise, that a teacher of Israel should be at a loss upon such a subject, and concluded by representing this part of his instructions as "earthly things," when compared with the deep mysteries of his Person and Redemption, which he afterwards declared to him as "heavenly things." For this change takes place on earth continually, even as often as sinners are turned from their evil ways, and become truly pious and holy persons: it may very aptly be illustrated by the most common concerns of life: it lies as level to our capacities, (if our minds were unprejudiced,) as almost any of the works of God with which we are surrounded: and the necessity of it may be proved by as cogent and conclusive arguments, as any thing of a worldly nature can be.—The question then is 'What

* Rom. viii. 1—16.

'did our Lord mean by being *born again*, or *born of* 'the *Spirit?*' To this I shall endeavour to give a plain and particular answer; subjoining a compendious review of the arguments, by which the necessity of regeneration hath been often proved; and concluding with some observations and inferences of a practical nature and tendency.

It hardly need be said, that the ordinance of baptism, however administered, is not "regeneration by "the Spirit." They who resolve all that is said in Scripture on this head, into the observance of an external rite, must suppose, that none can enter Christ's church on earth, or his kingdom in heaven, or even understand the real nature of them, unless they have been baptized with water, whatever be their character or the cause of the omission: nay they must likewise consider all baptized persons as truly illuminated, real christians, and heirs of heaven; for all who are born of God are his children and heirs. No doubt, baptism is (as circumcision was,) the *outward sign* of regeneration: but they, who are satisfied with the outward sign without the inward and spiritual grace, should return to school or to the nursery, and learn over again a part of their catechism, which they have no doubt forgotten; for it expressly states the inward and spiritual grace of baptism to be 'a death unto sin, and 'a new birth unto righteousness.' Indeed the *fathers*, as they are called, (that is, the teachers of the Christian church, during some ages after the death of the postles,) soon began to speak on this subject in uncriptural language: and our pious reformers, from an ndue regard to them and to the circumstances of the

times, have retained a few expressions in the liturgy, which not only are inconsistent with their other doctrine; but also tend to perplex men's minds, and mislead their judgment on this important subject. It is obvious, however, from the words above cited and many other passages, that they never supposed the mere outward administration of baptism to be *regeneration*, in the strict sense of the word: nor can any man, without the most palpable absurdity, overlook the difference between the baptism that is "outward "in the flesh," and "that of the heart, by the Spirit, "whose praise is not of men but of God."*

Nor does regeneration merely signify a *reformation* of the outward conduct, or a ceasing from vice to practice virtue. Some persons have been so preserved from immoralities, that they do not want such an outward reformation, as is meant by those who favour this interpretation: yet they as well as others must be *born again*, or they can neither *see*, nor "*enter into*, "the kingdom of God." Indeed, if the strong language and multiplied figures of the Scripture on the subject, mean nothing more than this; we must be constrained to allow, that the plainest matter in the world is so covered and obscured by mysterious language, as to render it extremely perplexing, and even unintelligible, to ordinary readers. How should they suppose according to the dictates of unlettered common sense, that such solemnity of introduction, emphasis of expression, and accumulation of metaphor, only mean, that a wicked man cannot be an heir of

* Rom. ii. 29. 1 Pet. iii. 21.

eaven, unless he amend his life? for who except vowed infidels or profligates, ever supposed that he ould?

Neither is regeneration merely a *conversion* from ne *creed* or *sect* to another: or even from atheism, udaism, infidelity, or idolatry, to christianity. If without *holiness* no man shall see the Lord," then ight we pass through changes of this kind, till we ad tried all the modes of religion that have been nown on earth; and yet at last be excluded as unre-enerate and unclean from the kingdom of heaven.—)n the other hand it does not consist in any kind of *mpressions*, or *new revelations;* any succession of ter-ors or consolations; or any whisper, as it were, from iod to the heart concerning his secret love, choice, purpose to save us. Many such experiences have en related by those, who still evidently continued slaves of sin; and " Satan transformed into an ngel of light," has done immense mischief in this y: for, the confidence of these persons seems in eral to be rather the effect of delusion and self-flat-, than an express design of imposing on other . Some of these things indeed, (as terror, and olation succeeding it,) commonly accompany a g change; others, which are evidently enthusias-*may* nevertheless be found in the case of some re really born of God: yet they are neither re-tion itself, nor any effect or evidence of it; but a disgraceful and injurious appendage to it, from human infirmity and the devices of

ving that the expressions, *born of God*, or born

again, are figurative; we must yet contend, that the metaphor is significant and proper.—A new born infant is a *new creature*, brought into the world by almighty power, endued with life, and with certain propensities and capacities. It is a human being, and has all things pertaining to human nature in a weak and incipient state: but by proper care and sustenance, it may grow up to maturity, and the perfection of manhood. In like manner the divine power produces in the mind of a sinner such a change as renders him a *new creature*, with new propensities and capacities: but these are only in a feeble and incipient state, and exposed to much opposition and danger on every side. Provision is made for this "new born babe," in "the "sincere milk of the word," and in the salvation of Christ; by means of which, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, he grows up gradually to maturity.—No new *faculties* are communicated in this change, (as some pious persons have inaccurately stated, by which the subject has been rendered less intelligible and an opening given to many plausible objections:) but a new and heavenly *direction* is given to all those faculties which the Creator had bestowed, but which sin had perverted. The capacity of understanding, believing, loving, and rejoicing, previously belonged to the man's nature: but the capacity of understanding the real glory and excellency of heavenly things, of believing the humbling truths of revelation in an efficacious manner, of loving the holy beauty of the divine character and image, and of rejoicing in God's favour and service, belong to him as "born of the "Spirit."

Regeneration may then be defined—'A change
rought by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the un-
erstanding, will, and affections of a sinner, which
s the commencement of a *new kind of life*, and
hich gives another direction to his judgment, de-
ires, pursuits, and conduct.'—The mind seems to
first, by a divine energy, prepared, (as the eyes of
lind man, which have the film or obstruction re-
oved from them,) to perceive the *real nature* and
mparative value of objects around it, and of those
oposed by the gospel; concerning which, through
e ignorance and depravity of fallen nature, the cor-
pt maxims of the world, and the artifices of Satan,
had formed a very erroneous judgment. Thus the
es of the understanding are opened; and the light of
vine truth shines into the heart, and gradually recti-
s its errors and misapprehensions.* The will and
ections also are influenced in the same manner: and
e man feels a disposition to fear, hate, and shun what
before delighted in, or regarded as harmless; and
love, choose, desire, and rejoice in, those things
at he before despised or hated. He seems to be in-
oduced, as it were, into a new world, in which he
ews himself and all things around him, through a
w *medium*. He wonders, that he had not before seen
m in the same light: and frequently he is so ama-
d at the insensibility or delusions of mankind, that
imputes them to mere ignorance, and imagines that
per instructions would bring them all over to his
timents; nor is he easily convinced of his mistake.

* Acts xvi. 14. xxvi. 18. Eph. i. 18.

His affections now receive in all respects a new dire tion; so that he possesses, as it were, a *whole syste* of sensations, of which he formerly had no conce tion: his fears and hopes, attachments and aversio joys and sorrows, successes and disappointme principally relate to those things which before g him scarcely any concern; but which now appear him of such vast importance, that the objects wh once engrossed his mind comparatively dwindle i insignificancy, even where he does not see them be criminal, polluting, or ensnaring. Hence it o happens that the new convert becomes neglectful such matters, considering them as too trifling to d serve his attention; and can only be retained in h station, or engaged to be diligent in worldly busine by a sense of duty, and a regard to the honour of t gospel.

It is not to be expected, that we should be capab of explaining the *manner* in which the Holy Spi effects this internal change: as we cannot understa how God creates and forms the body in the wom or how he breathes into it the breath of life. It is more importance for us to point out with precisi those *peculiar effects*, by which regeneration is di tinguished from all the counterfeits of it. Amo these *peculiar effects* we may first mention, an habi al and prevailing regard to the authority, displeasu favour, and glory of God, in the general tenour of o conduct, even when most remote from human obse vation; an abiding sense of his all-seeing eye, his co stant presence, and his all-directing and sustainin providence; and an unwavering persuasion, of hi

our worship, love, and service, and of our
is and accountableness to him. Connected
, regeneration always produces a deep and
s apprehension of the reality, nearness, and
ce of eternal things, and our infinite concern
so that compared with them, all temporal
pear as nothing. This is accompanied with a
osition to revere, examine, believe, and sub-
ne decisions of, the holy Scriptures; yea, a
er them, and delight in them, as the proper
ient of the soul.*

person, who has recently experienced this
hange, was previously destitute of religious
ge, he will find, that an increasing acquaint-
n the holiness of God and his obligations to
h the reasonableness, spirituality, and sanc-
he divine law; and with his own past and
onduct, dispositions, motives, and affections,
ared with this perfect standard, lead him to a
onviction of his sinfulness, exposure to de-
rath, inability to justify or save himself, and
of repentance, forgiveness, and the influences
grace: and if he before had some measure
inal knowledge, the truth, that had lain dor-
ill now become a living principle of activity.
lf-confidence and every towering imagination
ast down; all his supposed righteousness will
l to have sprung from corrupt motives, and
been both defective and defiled; and, what-
previous character may have been, "God be

* 1 Pet. ii. 2.

"merciful to me a sinner!" will be the genuine language of his heart. So that, deep humiliation and self-abasement, a broken and contrite spirit, godly sorrow, repentance, and conversion to God, are the never failing effects of regeneration.

Thus the divine Saviour, and his merits, atonement, and mediation, become glorious in the eyes and precious to the heart, of the regenerated sinner: he now perceives in some degree the wisdom, and feels the power, of the doctrine of the cross, which before he deemed "foolishness:" he "counts all but "loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," and gladly receives him, as his Prophet, Priest, and King.* He learns to love him whom he once slighted and despised: he begins to admire the excellency of his character, to value his favour, and to desire communion with him above all things; to be thankful for his unspeakable love and inestimable benefits; to be zealous for his honour, and devoted to his cause; to "love the brethren" for his sake, and his neighbours and enemies after his example;† and to exercise self-denial, and to endure loss, hardship, or suffering in his service. By degrees he is even enabled to say with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory save in "the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the "world is crucified to me, and I unto the world!"‡ "For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the "world; and this is the victory that overcometh the "world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh

* John i. 12, 13. 1 John v. 1.
† Gal. vi. 14.
‡ 1 John iii. 14. iv. 21.

, but he that believeth that Jesus is the God?"*

postle John mentions in a detached manner other peculiar effects of regeneration.—"Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.—In this the children of God "are manifest and the children of the devil: whoso- "ever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither "he that loveth not his brother."† "Ye know that "every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, "because we love the brethren;" "for love is of God, "and every one that loveth is born of God, and "knoweth God." "We know that whosoever is "born of God sinneth not."‡ Thus all the regenerate may adopt the apostle's words, "With open face, be- "holding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are "changed into the same image, from glory to glory, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord."§ So that, repentance, faith in Christ, love of God and man, love of the brethren in an especial manner, deliverance from the dominion of sin and Satan, victory over the world, abhorrence of evil, patience, meekness, spirituality, temperance, justice, truth, purity, and all the fruits of the Spirit, are the genuine effects of that change, without which "no man can see," or "enter into the "kingdom of God;" though the whole is imperfect

* 1 John v. 4, 5. † 1 John iii. 9, 10.
‡ 1 John. ii. 29. iii. 14. iv. 7. v. 18. § 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

in degree, and, counteracted by the remaining power of in-dwelling sin and manifold temptations.

That this is the real meaning of this scriptural expression, may be further evinced, by briefly considering several other metaphors which express the same change. It is called a *new creation.*—"If any man be "in Christ, he is a *new creature;* old things are passed "away; behold all things are become new."* The apostle speaks of it with allusion to the creation of the world. "God, who commanded the light to shine "out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in "the face of Jesus Christ." Thus educing likewise order out of confusion, and beauty out of deformity.† —"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any "thing, nor uncircumcision, but *a new creature,*" or *a new creation;* "for we are his workmanship *created* "in Christ Jesus unto good works."‡

It is also a *resurrection.*—There are, so to speak, three kinds of life,—*animal, rational,* and *spiritual. Animal life* implies the capacity of performing animal functions and relishing animal pleasures, which man possesses in common with the brutes: *rational life* rises a degree above this, and includes the capacity of rational investigation, and of relishing intellectual pleasure, of which mere animals have no conception; this, man possesses in common with unembodied spirits: but *spiritual life* is a still nobler distinction, and the perfection of created being; as it consists in the capa-

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † 2 Cor. iv. 6.
‡ Gal. vi. 15. Eph. ii. 10. iv. 24.

city of performing and delighting in spiritual actions, in which angels find their chief felicity, but of which the most rational man in the world, who is not *born again*, is as entirely incapable as the brutes are of philosophy. *Animal life* may subsist without either intellectual or spiritual capacities; *these* may subsist apart from animal propensities; and an *intelligent* agent may be destitute of *spiritual* capacity, as fallen angels are; but *spiritual* life pre-supposes *rational* powers. Adam, created in the image of God, possessed them all: but when he sinned he lost his *spiritual* life; for the Spirit of life departed, and he became *dead in sin*. From that time he possessed the propensities of *animal nature*, and the capacities of an *intelligent agent:* but he became incapable of delighting in the *spiritual* excellency of divine things; and this is the condition of every man until "the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, "makes him free from the law of sin and death,"* by that spiritual resurrection of which we speak.†

The Lord also repeatedly promises "to give his peo- "ple a new heart and a new spirit;" "a heart of flesh "instead of a heart of stone;" and "to write his law in "the heart:"‡ and this must certainly imply such an entire change wrought in the *judgment*, *dispositions*, and *affections*, as constitutes a preparation for obeying "not by constraint, but willingly." This is also described as "putting off," or "crucifying, the old man;" "crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts," "putting on the new man;" being "transformed by

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* Rom. viii. 2. † Rom. vi. 4. Eph. ii. 1, 5, 6. Col. iii. 1.
‡ Jer. xxxi. 31—33. Ezek. xi. 19, 20. xxxvi. 25—27.

"the *renewing* of our mind;" or "*renewed* in the "spirit of our mind, and putting on the *new man*, "which after God is created in righteousness and true "holiness."* These expressions especially teach us, that regeneration is the beginning of a fallen creature's *recovery* to that rectitude of soul, and conformity to the holy image of God, in which he had at first been created, but which had been lost by sin. In this view David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, "and renew a right spirit within me."† This same renovation is likewise spoken of by Moses when he says, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart "and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God "with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou "mayest live:" and in many other places it is mentioned under the same image.‡ It is also represented by the grafting of a tree, through which the nature of it is changed and meliorated, and it is made to bear good fruit.—These and such like metaphors and similitudes abundantly illustrate and confirm the explanation that has been given of regeneration; but can never be made to coincide with the sentiments of those, who explain it of only an outward form or amendment; or of such as mistake some transient impressions or emotions for this abiding renovation of heart.

The *necessity* of regeneration might indeed be entirely rested on the solemn and repeated declarations

* Rom. xii. 2. Gal. v. 24. Eph. iv. 22—24. Col. iii. 9, 10.
† Ps. li. 10.
‡ Deut. xxx. 6. Acts vii. 51. Rom. ii. 28, 29. Col. ii. 11.

of the Saviour and Judge of men: for those multitudes, who hope for heaven while they pay no regard to this part of Scripture, strangely presume, either that Christ was mistaken, or that he will depart from his word in their favour! But other conclusive proofs may be adduced, that "except a man be born again, he cannot "enter the kingdom of God," resulting from the nature of God and of man, of true religion and happiness.

No creature can be satisfied, unless its capacities of enjoyment coincide with its sources of pleasure, or unless it subsists in its proper element. The various kinds of animals are perfectly satisfied with their several modes of living, while unmolested and sufficiently provided for: but they are uneasy when out of their place, though in a situation which pleases other creatures. Different men also have different tastes: no one is comfortable, unless his inclination is gratified; and every one is apt to wonder, what pleasure others can take in that which is irksome to him. But who is there, that *naturally* takes delight in the spiritual worship and service of God? Are not these things the weariness and aversion of men? And are not those persons generally deemed melancholy, who renounce other pleasures for the sake of them? That "which is "born of the flesh, is flesh," or carnal; and "the car-"nal mind is enmity against God;" whose holy perfections, spiritual law and worship, sovereign authority, and humbling truth, are disliked by all unregenerate men, in proportion as they become acquainted with them. This is manifest, not only from the other vices of mankind, but especially from the prevalence of ido-

latry, infidelity, superstition, and impiety: for h[illegible] in every age, almost with one consent, pref any absurdity to the truths, precepts, and ordina of revelation, and every base idol to the One li and true God!

Indeed, they who carefully watch their own he while they think seriously of the omnipresence, omn tence, omniscience, justice, holiness, truth, and s reignty of God; of his laws, threatenings, and j ments; and of their own past and present sins; will "a witness in themselves" to the enmity of the c mind against God. So that except a man be again, he cannot take any pleasure in God, nor God take any pleasure in him: he cannot be sul to the law of God: he cannot come to him or w with him:* he cannot render him unfeigned pra and thanksgivings; but must either neglect relig or rest in mere external observances. He can nei deem the service of God perfect freedom, and re it as his privilege, honour, and happiness; nor e cise unfeigned repentance for all his sins: but in at least, he will exalt himself, palliate his crimes, ject to the severity of God, and murmur at his pointments. He cannot cordially receive the gos or live by faith in Christ for "wisdom, righteousn "sanctification, and redemption;" nor perceive preciousness of his Person, mediation, and kingd the glory of his cross, his unsearchable riches, incomprehensible love. It is impossible that he sho unfeignedly give to the Lord the whole glory of

* Amos iii. 3.

ation; or practise from proper motives, meekness,
ence, gratitude, forgiveness of injuries, and
:nemies; or count "all but loss for Christ," re-
nce all for him, bear reproach and persecution for
sake, devote himself to his service, even unto
th; and then at last receive eternal life as the free
ift of God" in him. Nor can he enter into the spi-
al meaning of divine ordinances, (especially of
tism and the Lord's supper,) or seek the spiritual
:sings of the new covenant with decided prefer-
:; or love the true worshippers of God as the ex-
:nt and honourable of the earth. Nay, an unregene-
man could not relish the company, the work, the
ship, or the joy of heaven; but would be disgust-
:ven with the songs and employments of angels
"the spirits of just men made perfect;" as per-
:, who are in various respects widely different from
1 other, must know, if they would but carefully
sider the subject, and reflect on the state and
ıghts of their own hearts. But the nature of God,
ıoliness, of happiness, and of heaven, is unchange-
:: and therefore, either *we must be changed*, or we
ıot be either holy or happy.

ıll the Scriptures above referred to imply, that re-
eration is wrought by "the exceeding greatness
: the mighty power of God:" but, it should be
:rved, that he operates on the minds of rational
ıtures according to their nature. The *instantaneous*
:wal of a fallen angel to the divine image, would
ıs real a display of omnipotence as his first cre-
ıı, and in some respects a greater: but the Lord
ht effect this renovation in a different manner.

Having made use of *truth;* as the medium of his almighty energy, in overcoming the dark and obstinate enmity of his fallen nature, and in producing a willingness to be restored; he might afterwards require his concurrence in the use of means, through which that recovery should be effected. Now, we are informed, that the Lord regenerates sinners by his holy word: ministers, therefore, and parents, and many others in different ways, are bound to set before those committed to their care, the doctrines and instructions of the Sacred Scriptures; and to treat them as reasonable creatures, addressing their understandings and consciences, their hopes and fears, and all the passions and powers of their souls; beseeching God "to "give them repentance to the acknowledging of the "truth." And all they, who are convinced that such a renewal must take place in them, or else that they must be miserable, should be induced, by the consideration that they cannot change their own hearts, (that being the work of the Holy Spirit,) to seek this inestimable blessing, by reading the Scriptures, retirement, meditation, self-examination, hallowing the Lord's day, hearing faithful preaching and other instruction, breaking off known sin, practising known duties, avoiding vain company and dissipation, and earnestly praying to God, to "create in them a clean "heart, and to renew a right spirit within them." Convictions of our inability have a similar effect upon us in all other cases; and uniformly induce us to seek help from those who are able to help us, with an earnestness proportioned to the supposed importance of the interest that is at stake.

As for those who continue to treat this subject with contempt and derision: it is sufficient to observe, that, seeing they will neither believe our testimony, nor that of Christ; they will at last have no cause to complain, if left destitute of that gracious influence which they have so despised.—Some may, however, believe that *such things are*, who are yet at a loss to know *what they are;* and them I would press in the most urgent manner, to beg of God daily and earnestly, to teach them what it is to be born again; and then in due time their own experience will terminate their perplexity.—But let those who *admit* the doctrine, beware lest they rest in the *notion*, without the experience and effects of it. And finally, let all who have known the happy change, recollect continually, that they need to be renewed more and more;* and should therefore unite with gratitude for what the Lord hath wrought, persevering prayer for a more complete recovery unto the divine image, in all the powers, dispositions, and affections of their souls.

* Tit. iii. 5.

ESSAY XIII.

On the Personality and Deity of the Holy with some thoughts on the Doctrine of th Trinity.

THE Christian dispensation is distinguished apostle as "the ministration of the Spirit;"* careful investigation of the Scriptures must c an impartial enquirer, that the promise of t Spirit is the grand peculiarity of the New Tes even as that of the Messiah was of the Old. therefore shown the nature and necessity of *re tion*, it regularly occurs to us in this place, t more particular statement of the scriptural concerning the Holy Spirit.—Those thing which relate to the *Personality* and *Deity* of t rit, and to the *doctrine of the Trinity* as co with it, will constitute our present subject: w extraordinary and ordinary operations, influen gifts; the office he performs in the œconomy salvation, and the duties thence incumbent u must be reserved for the next Essay.

* 2 Cor. iii. 8.

When we use the term *personality*, we simply mean, that language is used in Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit, and actions are ascribed to him, which are suited to convey the idea of a *personal Agent;* and such as would be extremely improper, if a mere *attribute, or mode of operation*, was intended. Yet all who deny the *personality* of the Holy Spirit, and pay any suitable respect to the sacred Oracles, in which so much is constantly ascribed to him, must hold the latter opinion. We do not, however, suppose, that the words *person* and *personality* can, in an adequate manner, explain such a subject, or even assist our conceptions in respect of mysteries, which we profess to consider as absolutely incomprehensible.

Indeed these words, in this use of them, are not found in Scripture: but when divine truths are opposed with ingenuity, learning, and pertinacity; it becomes necessary for those, who would "contend "earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," to vary their terms, and to introduce such as may express, in as exclusive a manner as possible, *the sense in which they understand* the declarations of Scripture: because their opponents will invent some plausible method of explaining away those which had before been in use. That imperfection, which characterizes every thing which belongs to man, is peculiarly discernible in human language: the mysteries of the infinite God can only be declared in words originally taken from the relations and affairs of men; and every thing that relates to *infinity* confounds and overwhelms our *finite* and narrow capacities. The most careful and able writers cannot, on such topicks, wholly pre-

vent their readers from attaching ideas to their words, which they did not mean to convey by them: so that they, whose object it is to put an absurd construction on our expressions, or to enervate by a plausible interpretation the language of Holy Scripture, will never find it very difficult to accomplish their purpose, as far as the generality of mankind are concerned. If we speak of three distinct Persons in the Godhead, they may charge us with holding three distinct gods; supposing or pretending, that we consider this *incomprehensible* distinction to be as perfectly like the obvious distinction of three men from each other. On the other hand, the labour, study, and ingenuity of revolving centuries, have so perplexed the subject, that we cannot at present find words explicitly to state our sentiments, and exactly to mark in what respects we differ from our opponents, unless we use such terms as they object to: at least this is my principal reason for adhering to them. If, however, our expressions convey to the reader's mind the doctrine of Scripture, with as much perspicuity and precision, as human language generally admits of; it is mere trifling to object to them, because they are not found in the Bible: for *truths*, not *words*, constitute the matter of revelation, and *words* are only the vehicle of *truths* to our minds. We are in fact, deeply convinced that some men have got the *habit* or *art* of evading the force of scriptural terms, and of thus misleading others into error: and is it not allowable for us to state our sentiments in other words; and then to prove that those sentiments are actually contained in holy Scripture? or can we do otherwise, unless we be disposed to give

ur opponents every possible advantage in the argu-
nent? For it cannot well be doubted by impartial
ersons, that aversion to the *doctrines themselves* lies
t the bottom of those objections, which are made to
he *words* in which their defenders have been used to
express them.

We proceed therefore, to consider the *personality* of the Holy Spirit: premising, that as "these are hea-
"venly things,"* we can neither explain them clearly in human language, nor illustrate them fully by earth-
y things, nor yet prove them by arguments from hu-
nan reason. The whole rests *entirely* on the authority
f divine revelation; we gain our knowledge of it by
imply believing God's sure testimony; and we should
mprove it to practical purposes in humble adoration,
nd not treat it as a subject of disputatious speculation,
r presumptuous curiosity. And may he, who hath
romised to "give his Holy Spirit to those who ask
"him," guide us by his divine teaching into the sanc-
ifying knowledge of the truth, in this and every sub-
ect that we investigate!

If such language be uniformly used in the Scrip-
ures concerning the Holy Spirit, as in all other cases
would convey to our minds the ideas of *personality* nd *personal agency*, we may be sure that the true be-
iever will conclude him to be a *personal Agent*. In
llegories indeed, and in sublime poetry, we often find
ttributes, propensities, or modes of operation, personi-
ied; but no one, except the most ignorant reader, is
n danger of being misled. Should any man suppose,

* John iii. 12, 13.

that Wisdom, in the book of Proverbs, was introduced merely as an allegorical person; we might allow that he had some colour for his opinion: though I should rather say, that the Messiah, the Word and Wisdom of the Father, who is made wisdom to us, is the real speaker in those passages.—But if such bold figures of speech, without any intimation, are introduced in historical or didactick discussions; or in *promises* and *precepts*, that is, in *grants* and *laws*, where the greatest precision is absolutely necessary; what instruction can be with *certainty* derived from revelation? or how shall we know what we are to believe, to do, or to expect? Surely this supposition tends entirely to render the Scriptures useless; and to perplex and bewilder every serious enquirer after the way of eternal life! Now, I shall, almost exclusively, select my proofs of the *personality* of the Holy Spirit, from those parts of the sacred volume, which are of the latter description.

Our Lord thus encouraged his apostles, when about to leave them; "I will pray the Father, and he "shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide "with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth."* Afterwards he added, "The Comforter which is the "Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my "name, *He* shall teach you all things:"† and the personal pronoun (ἐκεῖνος.) is used in this and several other passages, especially in those that follow. "When the "Comforter is come,—even the Spirit of truth, which "proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me."‡

* John xiv. 16, 17. † John xiv. 26. ‡ John xv. 26

"When he cometh,—he shall not speak of himself; "but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak:" "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and "shall shew it unto you:"* Not to insist further on the repeated use of the personal pronoun, which the ordinary rules of language appropriates *in such discourses*, to a personal agent: *being sent*, *coming*, *testifying*, *receiving*, *shewing*, *teaching*, *hearing*, and *speaking*, do undoubtedly imply *personal agency*, if any words can determinately convey that idea: and if we suppose the strongest rhetorical figures, that ever orators or poets have used, to be constantly interwoven in the plainest instructions and promises; we must infer that the language of the Scripture is so indeterminate and unusual, that no certain conclusions can be drawn from it. This indeed seems to be the inference, that some interpreters of the Scripture are willing should be deduced from their observations: but an insinuation more dishonourable to God and to his holy word, can hardly be imagined.

In like manner, the apostle Paul, when expressly instructing the Corinthians concerning the gifts of the Spirit, uses the strongest personal language: "All "these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, di- "viding to every man severally as he will."† Now are not *working*, *dividing*, and *willing*, personal acts? or can such terms be used of a mere *attribute*, consistently with the precision required in religious instructions?—Again, he says "The Spirit searcheth "all things; yea, the deep things of God." For what

* John xvi. 7—15. † 1 Cor. xii. 11.

" man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit
" of a man which is in him? even so the things of God
" knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."*

We read likewise that the Holy Spirit *dwells in us, leads us, bears witness with our spirits, makes intercession for us;* and " He that searcheth the hearts, " knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit:" and who can deny that all this implies *personal* agency?†—The sacred historian who records the first propagation of Christianity, also records several instances, in which the Holy Spirit spake, acted, and commanded. " The " Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David;"‡ " The " Spirit said unto Philip: Go near and join thyself to " this chariot."§ " The Spirit said to Peter, behold " three men seek thee; arise therefore, and get thee " down, doubting nothing, for I have sent them:"‖ " The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and " Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them; " so they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, de- " parted,"¶ " It seemed good to the Holy Ghost."** " They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost." " The " Spirit suffered them not."†† " Well spake the Holy " Ghost by Esaias."‡‡ To this the language of other Scriptures accords, " Wherefore as the Holy Ghost " saith:"§§ " Let him hear what the Spirit saith unto " the churches."‖‖ That such is the frequent phraseology of Scripture is undeniable: and in those sacred

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* 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11. † Rom. viii. 11, 14, 16, 26, 27.
‡ Acts i. 16. § Acts viii. 29. ‖ Acts x. 19, 20.
¶ Acts xiii. 2, 4. ** Acts xv. 28. †† Acts xvi. 6, 7.
‡‡ Acts xxviii. 25. §§ Heb. iii. 7. ‖‖ Rev. ii. 7.

acles, which were given to make us wise unto sal-
tion, we are evidently taught to think of the Holy
pirit, as of an Agent, *willing*, *hearing*, *speaking*,
ting, *commanding*, *forbidding*, *receiving and exe-
ting a commission:* and performing a part in the
eat work of our salvation, distinct from that of the
ther *by* whom, or that of the Son *through* whom,
is given unto men. I apprehend, that they, who
ny this doctrine, would feel themselves embarrassed,
familiarly using such language as this concerning
e Spirit; or in speaking "according to the oracles
of God," in their discourses, treatises, or devotions:
least many of them deem it convenient to adopt a
ore literal, philosophical, or modern style, lest they
ould mislead some of their unestablished disciples,
give men reason to call their consistency in ques-
on.

When the *personality* of the Holy Spirit has been
oved from the word of God, little difficulty remains
ascertaining his Deity. The powerful operation of
e Holy Ghost, in our Lord's miraculous conception,
ndered it proper to call him the Son of God, even
respect of his human nature.* Ananias, by lying
the Holy Ghost, lied unto God:† Christians are
the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth
in them;" yea, they are "an habitation of God
through the Spirit:"‡ Indeed the indwelling of the
loly Spirit in all believers, wherever dispersed or
owever numerous, evidently implies the divine at-

* Luke i. 35. † Acts v. 3, 4.
‡ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Eph. ii. 22.

tribute of Omnipresence: nor could he "sea
"things, yea, even the deep things of God,"
he were Omniscient. His work of regenera
new creation and sanctification, requires omni
to effect it: and surely all these are divine att
incommunicable to any creature! Yet, "if a
"have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of
and they are looked upon by the apostle as st
ignorant of christianity, who do not know tha
tians "are the temple of God, and that the S
"God dwelleth in them." But of this more at
proof will be given, when we come to consi
ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit.

The very titles given to him confirm the sar
clusion. He is called by the way of eminence
"Holy Spirit," "the Spirit of holiness," "th
"of truth," "the Spirit of power," "the S
"promise," "the Spirit of wisdom and know
"the Comforter," "the eternal Spirit." The
several other expressions of a similar nature,
denote both his essential perfections, and the
or effect of his influences on our minds; and t
guish him from all those created spirits, wh
"sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation
when it is said, that "He divideth to every
"verally as he will;" his divine Sovereignty,
as his personal volition, is declared to us.

But if *distinct personality*, *agency*, and *div*
fections be, in scripture, ascribed to the FATH
to the SON, and to the HOLY SPIRIT; no wo

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* Rom. v. ii. 9—11.

more exactly express the doctrine, which must unavoidably be thence inferred, than those commonly used on this subject, viz. that 'there are three distinct Persons in the Unity of the Godhead.' The sacred oracles most assuredly teach us, that the One living and true God is, in some inexplicable manner, *Triune*: for he is spoken of, as *One* in some respects, and as *Three* in others. Nor is it a matter of subordinate importance; since the dependence, confidence, affections, and worship, peculiar to christianity, are manifestly connected, by an indissoluble tye, with our sentiments in this respect: for (not to anticipate the subject of the ensuing Essay,) how can we avoid "grieving the Spirit," if we entertain thoughts of him infinitely beneath his divine dignity and excellency?

Men may, and probably will, persist in confidently *asserting without proof*, that the doctrine of the Trinity is either a contradiction in itself, or inconsistent with the Unity of the Deity; they may inform us, that the primitive Christians learned it from Plato and his followers, and so corrupted the faith by philosophy; (though it is a thousand times more likely, that Plato borrowed his ideas from those Scriptures which were extant in his time:) and they may dignify themselves with the name of *Unitarians*, as if none else worshipped the one true God. But we shall still have the satisfaction, (mingled with our regret at such departures from the faith,) to find that they grow proportionably shy of the phraseology of the Scriptures; that they want to diminish men's reverence for the sacred writers; that they are constrained to adopt methods of interpretation, in respect of those testimonies they still

admit to be a divine revelation, which would be deemed contemptible, if employed in fixing the sense of any classick author: and that they make their principal appeal, not to the oracles of God, but to the oracles of human reason, or to the vague and disputed standard of antiquity. It must be evident to all, who are conversant with modern treatises on these subjects, that such as oppose the doctrine of the Trinity, no longer attempt to support their sentiments, by appealing to the Scripture as the standard of truth, and particularly examining and answering the arguments we thence deduce: at the same time, allowing the Bible, as we have received it from our fathers, to be the infallible word of God; and that it ought to be interpreted by the same rules, which judicious scholars employ in explaining other ancient writers. A very small part of the Scripture is by them considered of *divine* authority: and they would have us discard the rest as doubtful or irrational, or at most to give it a very subordinate measure of attention.

Could it be proved that *Trinitarians* were not *Unitarians* also, some ground would be gained by opponents: but we suppose, that the Trinity of Persons in the Deity consists with the Unity of the divine Essence; though we pretend not to explain the *modus* of it, and deem those reprehensible, who have attempted it: as the *modus* in which any being subsists, according to its distinct nature and known properties, is a secret to the most learned naturalists to this present day, and probably will always continue so. But if the most common of God's works, with which we are the most conversant, be in this respect incomprehen-

how can men think, that the *modus existendi* anner of existence) of the infinite Creator can vel to their capacities?—The doctrine of the ty is indeed a *mystery:* but no man hath yet ı that it involves in it a *real contradiction.* Many ventured to say, that it ought to be ranked with ıbstantiation, as equally absurd. But Archbishop son has shown, by the most convincing argu- imaginable, that transubstantiation includes the palpable contradictions; and that we have the evi- of our *eyes*, *feeling*, and *taste*, that what we re- in the Lord's supper is *bread*, and not the *body* ıan; whereas we have the testimony of our *eyes* that the words, "This is my body," are at all e Scriptures.—Now this is intelligible to the est capacity: it is fairly made out, and perfectly swerable: but who ever attempted thus to *prove* octrine of the Trinity to be self-contradictory? t testimony of our senses, or what demonstrated does it contradict? Yet till this be shown, it is er fair, nor convincing, to exclaim against it as adictory, absurd, and irrational.

is indeed very easy to say that Three and One ıt be the same; and then to show, that an absurd ı, which they falsely charge us with maintaining, f-contradictory. But, if we may not quote, as a *of our doctrine*, that remarkable text concerning ı there has been so much contest, whether it con- he genuine words of the apostle, or be an inter- on made in after ages; we may surely use it as ssing our sentiments; "There are Three that ır record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and

" the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One." *Three Persons*, the masculine being used; *one Being*, or one Deity, (*numen*, τὸ θεῖον,) the neuter being substituted. Now let any man in logical form prove, if he can, that these words involve a real contradiction: but till this is done, let none mistake confident assertion for demonstration.

I cannot but hope, that the preceding concise arguments have fully shown, that the sacred writers spoke as strong language, concerning the Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, as even the Nicene Fathers themselves did; though they did not use such illustrations, explanations, distinctions, or definitions, as the latter unhappily were induced to employ in the controversy: nor do I scruple to aver that the Deity of Christ hath been *fully proved* in the sixth and seventh Essays. And if these two points have been established on scriptural authority, all that can be urged against the doctrine of the Trinity on other grounds, only suggests these questions. Is the human intellect, or the infinite understanding of God, most competent to determine on the incomprehensible mysteries of the divine Nature? And shall we abide by the language of inspiration, or give it up for that of human reason? What is faith? Is it not a disposition to say, " let God " be true, and every man a liar?" for " the testimony " of God is sure, making wise the simple." If the Scripture is incontestably proved to be the word of God, by unanswerable external and internal evidences; and a man shall still presume to say, that to allow such a doctrine as ' that of the Trinity to be contain-' ed in it, is enough to impeach its divine authority:'

)unts only to this, that he is so " wise in his own
s," so " leans to his own understanding," and
ond of his own sentiments, that he is determined
) be convinced by any testimony human or di-

addition to the general argument, for the doc-
n question, above stated; it may be proper to
ler a few remarkable passages of Scripture, in
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are
oned together, or jointly addressed in the same
worship.—When our Lord was baptized, the
r, by a voice from heaven, declared him to be
loved Son, and publickly sealed his appointment
mediatorial office; of which he solemnly accept-
id on which he then entered: and the Holy Spi-
scending visibly, under the emblematick repre-
ion of a dove, lighted upon him, as through him
communicated to all his true disciples. Thus
hree Persons, in the sacred Trinity, evidently
according to the parts sustained by them, in the
work of man's salvation.—But the appointed
of Christian baptism is far more conclusive:
)tizing them in the *name*" (not *names*,) " of the
her, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."
ptism we declare our dependence on and devo-
ss to him, in whose name we are baptized; and
ainly is one of the most solemn acts of worship
1 we can perform. Would it not then greatly
o mislead us, if a *mere creature*, and *an attri-*
)r *mode of operation*, were joined with the One
God in this ordinance? Upon the Trinitarian
n the form is extremely proper: but that man

must surely have very lax notions of the peculiar honour due to God, and which he "will not give to "another," who can think it consistent with the doctrine of our opponents.—This form of baptism fully warrants the ancient excellent doxology retained by our church. 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, 'and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, 'is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.' It is also worthy of observation, that Anti-trinitarians in former times attempted to alter or improve our Lord's words, saying, 'In the name of the Father, 'and through the Son, and by, or *in*, the Holy Ghost;' which, joined with modern attempts to shew the scriptural form to be non-essential to baptism, continues a full proof, that the argument is of great force even in the opinion of our opponents.

When the Lord says,* "The Spirit of truth— "shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and "shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father "hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take "of mine, and shall shew it unto you:" he evidently establishes the doctrine of the Trinity. The personality, and consequently the Deity, of the Spirit, has been proved: if all things belonging to the Father, belong to Christ also, his Deity must be allowed: and thus the three persons in the sacred Trinity are here pointed out to our observation.

The apostolick benediction,† "The grace of the "Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the "communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all,

* John xvi. 13—15. † 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

nen;" has a plain reference to the one *name* in
h Christians are baptized: and it may remind us
ıe form of blessing appointed in the law.—
eak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this
se shall ye bless the children of Israel, saying to
ːm; The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the
ɹrd make his face shine upon thee, and be gra-
ɹus to thee: The Lord lift up his countenance
on thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put
ɹ *name* upon the children of Israel; and I will
ːss them."* The threefold repetition of the name
ehovah, with the concluding sentence, "they
ıll put *my name* upon the children of Israel," is
remarkable; and the whole accords to the adora-
of the heavenly worshippers, "Holy, Holy, Holy,
the Lord of hosts."† The benediction used by
was in reality a solemn act of worship, equally
the blessing pronounced by the priests. It was a
ɛr in behalf of the Corinthians, for all the bless-
of salvation; and these he sought from the Lord
s and from the Holy Spirit, as well as from God
Father.—The address of the apostle John to the
n churches in Asia, in which he wishes, or prays
grace and peace to them, from the eternal Father,
, "the seven spirits before the throne," and from
Lord Jesus,‡ is precisely of the same nature, and
ains a conclusive argument in proof of our doc-
. According to the emblematick style of the Re-
ion, the Holy Spirit, with reference to his mani-
gifts and graces, and to the seven churches in

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m. vi. 23—27. † Is. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8. ‡ Rev. i. 4—6.

Asia, is spoken of as "the seven spirits before "throne:" but we cannot doubt of the meaning can we imagine, that any created spirits would been thus joined with the eternal God in such an dent act of solemn adoration.

I shall close the present Essay by observing, the subject before us is of the greatest import Either Trinitarians or Anti-trinitarians are idola for they cannot both worship that God, who re himself to us in Scripture; but one of them substitute an imaginary being in his place. It is therefore, a subject to be decided by sallies of ostentation of learning, or attempting to render another odious or ridiculous. A sober, humble, te able mind, disposed to believe the testimony of G is above all things requisite in such enquiries: should be sought by fervent prayer; and the Sc tures should be daily and diligently examined wit obedient and reverential mind. The writer of t remarks was once an Anti-trinitarian, and on the p of leaving the Church of England, from objecti to her doctrine and worship *in this respect*. But study of the Scriptures has totally changed his ju ment: and as he then neglected, or disliked, the o doctrines which he now values more than life, was a stranger to vital experimental religion; so, cannot but perceive that they, who deny this doctri gradually give up other peculiarities of christian till the name alone, or very little more, is left of it. He must therefore deem it, (like the key-stone of arch,) essential to the support of evangelical pie and would conclude these observations on the Trini

with the apostle's words, "This is the true God, and "eternal life; little children, keep yourselves from "idols. Amen."

But while we deem the rejection of this doctrine a virtual renunciation of christian baptism, a dissent from the apostolical benediction, and a substitution of another object of worship in the place of the God of the Bible; and while we lament the rapid progress of this destructive heresy, which often proves a forerunner to prepare the way for a more avowed apostacy; we must also observe, that it is almost equally to be lamented, that so few, who profess the doctrine, seem to understand its real nature and tendency, or to experience its sanctifying efficacy upon their hearts. Alas! what will it avail any man to have maintained, or even triumphantly to have contended for, this fundamental truth, if he continue the devotee of ambition, avarice, or any other vile affection? Of what use is it to show the distinct offices of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the work of our salvation; unless we, as lost sinners, depend on the everlasting love and free mercy of the Father, on the merits and mediation of the incarnate Son, and on the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit? No outward administration of baptism can profit those who are not made, by *the true baptism*, the spiritual worshippers and servants of "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Nor can the pronunciation of the apostle's benediction save any man, who does not partake of the blessings pronounced in the inward experience of his own soul.

Finally, whilst we disregard the charge of bigotry, in refusing all *religious* intercourse with Anti-trinita-

rians, lest we should give a sanction to their heresy; let us protest against all attempts to injure them in their *temporal interests*. Every kindness is due to them, as men, when they need it; many of them, as good members of society, are entitled to civil respect and commendation: and by this conduct, we shall best silence the censures brought against our principles as intolerant; and prove that they enlarge the heart with the most diffusive philanthropy.

ESSAY XIV.

On the Gifts and influences of the Holy Spirit.

OUR present subject has given *occasion* to a variety of dangerous or destructive mistakes. While some have advanced claims with respect to it, which seem at least to place them upon an equality with prophets, apostles, and inspired writers; others, (perceiving the absurdity or arrogance of such pretensions; deeming themselves wise, able, or good, by their native powers and exertions; and not being sufficiently conversant with the subject to discriminate between what is scriptural and what antiscriptural;) have argued, that we neither need, nor are warranted to expect, any divine or supernatural influences; that they were vouchsafed to the apostles and primitive christians exclusively; and that all, now spoken of the operations or assistance of the Spirit, is mere enthusiasm and delusion. These opposite extremes have also admitted of intermediate errors and variations. Some contend, that there is no discoverable distinction between divine influences and the actings of our minds; and do not clearly admit of an exception, even as to the dif-

ferent *effects* produced by these distinct causes: o
suppose that they are immediately distinguishabl
an inward, and a kind of instinctive, conscious
like that which assured the prophets that they
divinely inspired: and thus, whilst they seem t
nour the Spirit, and will attempt nothing, till, as
say, they are moved by him, they covertly advar
claim to infallibility and perfections in those favo
seasons, or impute all their mistakes and follies t
sacred Agent.—Nor is it uncommon for men to
that they are influenced by the Holy Spirit, in
to establish other rules of faith and practice than
written word of God; to bring that, or some pa
it, into a measure of discredit; or even to subst
something wrought in them or by them, in the
of the righteousness and atoning blood of the
viour, whom the Spirit is sent to "glorify" an
men.—In short, much enthusiasm and spiritual p
and many fatal or disgraceful delusions have, o
one hand, arisen from misapprehensions of this
ject; and, on the other, multitudes have taken
sion from these incidental evils, to treat the whole
profane contempt and derision.

But a careful attention to the Scriptures, and t
ends, for which the Holy Spirit was promised,
enable us properly to discriminate in this impo
concern: and to show in what sense, and for
purposes, we ought to expect, and depend on
influences of the Spirit; and which of his gifts
operations were peculiar to the primitive times,
extraordinary occasions. I shall therefore, at pr
some thoughts on the miraculous gifts and

ts, imparted by the Holy Spirit;—on those ordinary ndowments, which uninspired men may reasonably xpect to receive from him;—on his common influ- nces upon the minds of many unconverted persons; —and on the special nature of that sanctifying work, by which "the vessels of mercy are afore prepared "unto glory."*

If we accurately mark the language of the Scriptures we shall find, that the Holy Spirit is spoken of, as the Author and Giver of all those miraculous and supernatural powers, with which any of the human race were ever endued.—Not only did "holy men of "God speak as they were moved by the Holy "Ghost:"† not only did apostles, evangelists, and primitive believers receive the Holy Ghost, enabling them to cast out devils, heal the sick, raise the dead, speak in languages before unknown, or interpret the discourses of others; but even Christ himself was "anointed by the Holy Ghost," to work his beneficent miracles.‡ He cast out devils "by the Spirit of "God;"§ who was given to Him "without measure:"‖ and "through the Holy Ghost he gave commandments "to his apostles."¶ Indeed the promises made to him in the Old Testament especially relate to this; and his very title of the *Messiah*, the *Christ*, the *Anointed* of the Lord, was derived from it.** Now we cannot satisfactorily account for these expressions, or reconcile them with our Lord's conduct, in speaking and act-

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* Rom. ix. 23. † 2 Pet. i. 21. ‡ Acts x. 38.
§ Matt. xii. 28. ‖ John iii. 34. ¶ Acts i. 2.
** Ps. xlv. 7. Is. xi. 2, 3. xlii. 1. lix. 21. lxi. 1.

ing as in his own name, or by his own authorit power; unless we advert to the distinction betwe divine and human nature, and his personal and n torial dignity; and remember, that, in respect divine nature, he is One with the Father and wi Holy Spirit, in the essence, perfections, and c tions of the Godhead. We must therefore co the Holy Spirit as the great Agent, according œconomy of the everlasting covenant, in the in tion of the Scriptures; in the performance of all miracles, by which the messengers of God aut cated their doctrine; and in the revelation of future events, which, being interwoven with part of the sacred volume, and receiving their ac plishment from age to age, confirm the divine ori of the whole to every attentive and impartial enqu

Such discoveries of the truth and will of God been made from the beginning: but they be more particular and copious, when Israel was bro out of Egypt, and "the law was given by Mo The prophets and other servants of God, who time to time were raised up to call the attentic Israel to his law and promises, or to effect extra nary deliverances for the nation, were endued miraculous powers by the same Spirit. At the co of Christ, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, Anna, spake of him by the Spirit; and his apo and seventy disciples partook of these extraordi gifts and miraculous powers, even before our L crucifixion. Yet the pouring out of the Spirit, at after the day of Pentecost, was so vastly superio energy, extent, and duration, that John, who had

nessed and experienced both, says, in recording the discourses of Christ, "This he spake of the Spirit,— "for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that "Jesus was not yet glorified."* Whatever had preceded that great event, was an earnest of the dispensation of the Spirit; yet it did not belong to it, nor was worthy to be compared with it. But when Jesus was risen and ascended on high, these gifts were showered down on men in rich abundance, to confirm the testimony of the apostles to his resurrection, and to qualify them and their fellow-labourers to spread the gospel through the nations: and being communicated by the laying on of the apostles' hands, the number of witnesses and instruments was continually multiplied, and provision was made for the rapid diffusion of their salutary doctrine. The evident design and use of these extraordinary operations of the Spirit was, to rouse the attention of a careless world to the spiritual doctrines of the gospel; to counterbalance men's prejudices in favour of their old traditions, and against religious innovations; and to put honour on those, who were commissioned to propagate christianity in the midst of contempt and persecution.† The gift of tongues, especially, seems to have been indispensably necessary, to enable the first preachers of the gospel to address men of different nations in a suitable manner; and the difficulty of learning the languages of heathen nations forms, at this day, one grand impediment to the promulgation of our holy religion, which

* John vii. 39.

† Matt. xxviii. 18—20. Mark xvi. 15—18. Luke xxiv. 46—49.

in some respects appears almost insurmountable.—These powers seem to have continued with the church, in some measure, during the first three centuries, or perhaps rather longer; but to have decreased in proportion as christianity obtained establishment in the world, and ceased to be propagated among pagan nations.—At length, when "the only wise God our "Saviour" saw, that occasional prejudices had sufficiently subsided, and extraordinary obstacles were in a great degree removed; and that the truth had only to contend with those lusts of man's fallen nature, and those efforts of the powers of darkness, which are common to every age and place; he was pleased to withdraw these extraordinary gifts and operations, and to carry on his work, by means of the written word, the fulfilment of prophecies, and other abiding evidences of the truth, and the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit. But he has no where expressly declared, that he will not on any future occasion endue his servants with miraculous powers, or confer on them the Spirit of prophecy. We may, however, be assured, that such powers will never be imparted, to enable men to support any thing materially different from that complete revelation which we now possess: and for thirteen hundred years at least, all pretences to miracles or prophecy have, in one way or other, tended to subvert the doctrine contained in the New Testament; and have justly been deemed impostures, or satanical delusions and marks of Antichrist.—*In this respect* therefore, the promise of the Spirit exclusively related to the primitive times; or at least, all pretensions at present to new revelations, predictions,

miracles, or infallibility, are enthusiastick, arrogant, and unwarranted.

The Scriptures are fully authenticated as a complete rule of faith and practice; christianity has all the advantages, which it can possess in a world that "lieth "in the wicked one;" there is no rival system, pretending to be a divine revelation, that can at all stand in competition with it; ministers may obtain needful qualifications, by the ordinary blessing of God on their diligent study; the establishment, which our religion has had for so many ages and through so many nations, gives it a sort of claim by prescription to the attention of mankind; and the Lord sees these things to be sufficient for the accomplishment of his purposes, in the present state of human affairs.

We may further observe, that the miraculous and prophetical powers, imparted by the Holy Spirit, had no inseparable connexion with *personal sanctity*,—and were sometimes bestowed on very wicked men. Balaam, "who loved the wages of unrighteousness," and perished among the enemies of God, might nevertheless have said with David, "The Spirit of the "Lord spake by me, and his word was in my "tongue."* Judas, as well as the other apostles, was doubtless endued with the power of casting out devils and working miracles; and Christ hath assured us, that "many will say unto him in *that day*, Lord, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and "in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name "done many wonderful works: and then will he pro-

* Numb. xxiii. 5, 16. xxiv. 2, 16—24. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

"fess unto them, *I never knew you;* Depart from me, "ye that work iniquity."*—These gifts were also liable to be abused by the ambition and corrupt passions of man; and, however useful to others, were injurious, or even fatal, to the possessor, if he were not disposed and enabled by the *sanctifying influences* of the Holy Spirit, to use them in humility, zeal, and love.†

But there are also other gifts derived from the same Spirit, which are *not directly of a sanctifying nature.* It is observable, that John the Baptist, who was "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb," wrought no miracles: yet our Lord declared, that "he was a prophet and more than a prophet;" and it is evident, that he was more illuminated in the nature of Christ's redemption and kingdom, than any of the apostles were, previously to the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. His divine illumination therefore, by which he was led to an extraordinary degree of discernment concerning the prophecies of the Old Testament, and his *ministerial endowments,* though not miraculous, were the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

Farther, the apostles and disciples, on the day of Pentecost, were not only endued with miraculous powers, but greatly advanced in their knowledge of the gospel, delivered from their prejudices and mistakes, raised above the fear of men, and enabled to speak with promptitude, facility, and propriety, far beyond what was natural to them, or what they could

* Matt. vii. 22, 23. 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3. † 1 Cor. xii. xiv.

ave acquired by habit or study. That wonderful hange, which in these respects took place in them, ught to be ascribed entirely to the agency of the pro-ised Spirit;* and we may hence conclude, that reli-ous knowledge, prudence, fortitude, utterance, and her endowments for the sacred ministry, or for any eful service in the church, are gifts of the Holy pirit. Diligence indeed in the use of proper means our duty: yet the diligence itself, and doubtless the ccess of it, should be acknowledged as the gift of e Spirit of Christ. On him we ought entirely to de-nd for all needful qualifications for the services al-ted us: and whilst we take to ourselves the blame every mistake, defect, and evil, which mixes with r endeavours; the whole glory of all that is true, e, or useful, should be ascribed to this divine gent.—Surely this may be done without enthusiasm arrogance! Indeed the apostle has taught us to do in his discourse on spiritual gifts; where he enu-erates *wisdom*, *knowledge*, and *the faculty of speak-g to edification, exhortation, and comfort*, among e operations of the Spirit; and these are evidently as ch wanted at present, as they were in the primitive es.† Need we then wonder, that the official minis-ions of numbers at present are so devoid of pathos, rgy, and *scriptural* wisdom; when we learn, that in r preparation for the ministry or the pulpit, they laim as enthusiasm and folly all dependence on the of the Holy Spirit? For, if "no man can say that sus is the Lord," or do any thing effectual to

* John xiv. 26. xvi. 12, 13. † 1 Cor. xii. 7—11. xiv. 3.

promote the gospel, "but by the Holy Ghost; if men, pretending to be teachers, affront this d Agent, by rejecting and vilifying his proffered a ance; the consequence must be, that they will b to deny or disgrace the doctrine of the gospel, ir of faithfully preaching it, and living under its s influence.

These gifts likewise may be possessed and cised by those who are strangers to the sanct work of the Holy Spirit. Men may be enabl the Spirit to attain knowledge in the mysteries gospel, and readiness in speaking or writing them, whilst they remain ungodly; even as some possessed miraculous or prophetical gifts, whils continued the slaves of avarice or lust. Thus pe are often raised up, and endued with eminent ta whose preaching excites great attention, and e the means of much good; or whose writings illun the church, and exceedingly tend to elucidat truth, and to silence the objections of her ene and yet these very men are themselves *cast-a* "because they received not the love of the tr neither obeyed it, but "obeyed unrighteousr These *spiritual* gifts, however, are as needful a sent as in old times: unless it can be believed, th are now so wise and good, and that christianity congenial to our nature, and so fully understoo practised; that we are perfectly competent, wi any divine assistance, to maintain its cause i world.

It has likewise been generally allowed by orth divines, that there are other influences of the

the mind, which do not always terminate in sanc-
ication. To "resist the Holy Ghost," seems to
an something more, than merely to reject the word
inspiration: and to "quench the Spirit," is not ex-
sively the sin of believers, when on some occa-
ns they neglect his holy suggestions. He strives
th, and powerfully stirs up, the minds of many who
not born again: new principles are not implanted,
t natural powers are excited; conscience is influ-
ced in part to perform its office, notwithstanding the
position of the carnal heart; and convincing views
given of many important truths. The Spirit con-
rs with an address to one man's *fear*, and even a
lix trembles before a prisoner in chains: another's
es are addressed, and "he hears gladly, and does
many things," though he will not divorce Herodias:
convincing arguments are applied with energy to
intelligent worldling, and he "is almost persuaded
be a christian." Such persons often take up a
fession of the gospel, and continue for a time, or
persist to the end, in an unfruitful form of god-
ss: and men of this description, who have been
nent for their talents, have been the principal here-
chs in every age; while the bulk of heretical so-
ies have been constituted of inferior persons of the
e class. Yet as far as truth produces its proper ef-
, though it be at length born down by human de-
ity and temptation, it ought to be ascribed to the
it: and in this sense, as well as in respect of mi-
ulous powers, men have been "partakers of the
Holy Ghost," and have yet fallen away beyond the

promote the gospel, ... to repentance.* O...
if men, pretending t... "strivings" are often ...
Agent, by rejectin... which accompany salvation,
ance; the conseq... distinguish between them
to deny or disg... They may be compared to ...
of faithfully p... though of distinct species, are ...
influence. ... our defective organs can discern ...
These g... them: till, being sown, and havi...
cised by ... respective plants, they are easily ...
work of ... from each other.
the Sp... ...rations made on Regeneration* must ...
gospe... as introducing what I shall here ad...
them... *sanctifying work of the Holy Spiri...*
pos... *of believers.* We may therefore obse...
co... conversion of three thousand persons on ...
a... Pentecost, the rapid success of the go...
... followed, and the holiness and joy of the ...
... christians, were as much the effect of that ...
... of the Spirit, as the miraculous gifts con...
... on the apostles: and the same change, at ...
... wrought in men's characters and conduct throu...
... gospel, must uniformly be ascribed to the sa...
...se.

But we shall be able to mark more precisely ...
...ture of these sanctifying influences of the Spirit, ...
...dverting to the language of Scripture on that su...
...ject.—The word Comforter, by which our Lord d...
...inguishes this divine Agent, may also signify an ...
...*ocate* or an *Admonisher;* and this title implies, t...
it is the office of the Holy Spirit to plead the caus...

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* Heb. vi. 4—6. x. 29. † Essay xii.

rts, to excite and animate us to all holy
o communicate to us all holy consola-
er which purifies, refreshes, and fructi-
ure; and fire, which illuminates, penetrates,
oftens, and consumes whatever cannot be, as
, changed into its own likeness, are the em-
of that Spirit with which Christ baptizes his
isciples.—"When he is come, he will *reprove*,"
vict—"of sin, of righteousness, and of judg-
nt." This divine light so discovers to men their
tions to God, and the demands of his perfect
that they are deeply convicted of guilt, even in
hings as before did not burden their consciences;
ally they soon perceive their state of condemna-
s unbelievers, and the atrocious evil of not re-
g Christ by faith. They are thus convinced of
stice of God in his dealings with sinners, and un-
nd his *righteousness* in justifying believers; and
brought to realize habitually a judgment to
as the whole tenour of revelation manifests to
that the prince of this world and all his subjects
der certain condemnation. These convictions
the consciences of those who experience them,
fter proportionably tender and susceptible; and
earts penitent, contrite, and watchful against all
ons and appearances of evil; disposed to resist
ation, and to strive against sin as the great ob-
their dread and abhorrence, to love purity, and
g for holiness; and they help to form the temper
t, meek, forgiving, and compassionate to the
or most prosperous, of mankind.
en the Holy Spirit has thus prepared the hearts

of sinners, (as he did those of the Jews on the day of Pentecost;*) "He glorifies Christ; for he receives "of the things of Christ, and shews them unto "them."† By his illuminating energy, by divesting the mind of proud and carnal prejudices, and by bringing the truths of Scripture to their remembrance, he discovers to them the glory and excellence of Emmanuel's Person, his infinite compassion and condescension, the perfection of his righteousness, the preciousness of his blood, the prevalence of his intercession, and the suitableness of his whole salvation. In proportion, therefore, as the sinner is abased and humbled in his own eyes, and is made to abhor all sin, the Comforter exalts the Saviour in his heart. Thus he becomes precious in his estimation; he perceives him to be "altogether lovely," "the Pearl of "great price," and that all things are but loss in comparison of him. Now he begins to discern something of his unsearchable riches, his unfathomable love, his inexhaustible fulness: and he finds that all he can want is comprised in a relation to Christ, and in union and communion with him. His liberty, honour, pleasure, and felicity, consist in having such a Saviour, Brother, and Friend; and those strains of admiring love, desire, gratitude, and praise, which once appeared to him too rapturous, or even enthusiastick, become the genuine language of his happiest hours. At the same time he knows that they are all far beneath the Saviour's real excellency and glory; and thus the love of Christ to him, and his reciprocal love to Christ,

* Acts ii. 37. † John xvi. 7—15.

nstrain him to live to his glory, to copy his exam-
:, and to obey his precepts.—Here again we may
ry properly observe, that in proportion as the doc-
ne of the Spirit is exploded, or overlooked, the
:rson and work of Christ are generally dishonoured:
l while men plume themselves on a rational reli-
)n, they evidence, and must frequently be conscious,
.t the language of Scripture does not suit their
ws; but far better accords with those of the enthu-
sts, whom they so liberally vilify, and so cordially
spise. Is it not then evident, that the reason, why
irist is no more *glorified* in the visible church, is
ıply this: men do not expect, depend on, or seek
, the influences of the Holy Spirit *in this respect:*
l for that reason are left to exalt themselves, to be
ılots for a system of vain philosophy, or implicitly
ıdopt the notions of some favourite author; and to
;rade the Light of the world and the Life of men?
[n this argument, the prayers of Paul for his con-
ts are peculiarly deserving of our attention; as most
them had respect, not to miraculous gifts, but to
:h things as are equally needful in every age. For
Ephesians he prayed " that the God of our Lord
esus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto
hem the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the
:nowledge of him: the eyes of their understanding
ıeing enlightened, that they might know what is
he hope of his calling, and what the riches of the
;lory of his inheritance in the saints: and what is
he exceeding greatness of his power towards them
hat believe:" and again, that " they might be
trengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner

" man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith;
" that being rooted and grounded in love, they might
" —know the love of Christ which passeth know-
" ledge." And for the Colossians, " that they might
" be filled with the knowledge of the Lord's will, in
" all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that they
" might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing,
" being fruitful in every good work, and increasing
" in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all
" might, according to his glorious power, unto all
" patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."* Now is it not necessary, that all christians should thus know God, understand the gospel and its privileges, and be inwardly strengthened in love and obedience to the Lord Jesus? Surely this is essential to real christianity in every age: and the state of the professing church of Christ, amidst all modern improvements, shews, that they can no more be produced without the influences of the Spirit, than skill in agriculture can ensure a crop of corn, without the influence of the sun and rain.—The apostle says, that " the love of God is
" shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, who is
" given unto us;" and whether we understand this of our sense of God's love to us, or of our exercise of love to him; it plainly implies that we cannot attain it, except by the influences of the Spirit, preparing and pervading all the faculties of our souls.† Indeed, all fervent affections towards God, or joy in him, are commonly deemed enthusiasm, by those who deny

* Eph. i. 17—19. iii. 16—21. 2 Cor. iv. 3—5. Col. i. 9—12.
† Rom. v. 5.

, and a decent conduct, with a form of
ıstitutes the sum total of their improved

.me apostle prays that the Romans "may
ıd in hope through the power of the Holy
st."* Hope is one of those graces, which *abides*
church:† and if this springs from the power
Spirit, and abounds through that power, we
onclude, that all who are destitute of his influ-
are either "without hope," or buoyed up in
ıptuous confidence.—According to Peter, the
r's obedience results from "the sanctification
ıe Spirit;" and he says, "Seeing ye have pu-
ł your souls, in obeying the truth, through the
it, unto unfeigned love of the brethren."‡
these are duties of christianity peculiar to no
place! and the assistance of the Spirit must be
lful to the performance of them at present, as
nspired apostles were the teachers of the church.
kingdom of God is—in righteousness, and
e, and joy in the Holy Ghost:"§ how then can
ejoice in the Lord always," without his blessed
ces?
this subject is most copiously discussed in the
chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Regard
vity, however, forbids me to enlarge on the
e: let it suffice in general to observe, that the
: there ascribes the believer's "deliverance

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xv. 13. † 1 Cor. xiii. 13. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 2, 22.
§ Rom. xiv. 17.

" from the law of sin and death," to " the Sp
" life in Christ Jesus;"* and derives the " sp
" *mind*, which is life and peace," from the
source. They, in whom the " Spirit of God dw
are " not in the flesh but in the Spirit;" but "
" man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is n
" his." They who " through the Spirit morti
" deeds of the body, shall live:" they " that are
or willingly guided and influenced, " by the S
" are the children of God." He dwells in them
as a " spirit of bondage," to induce them to
God from servile motives; but " as a Spirit of
" tion, by whom they cry, Abba, Father:" and
producing all filial dispositions and affections in
hearts, " he witnesses with their spirits, that the
" the children and heirs of God." They have, t
fore, " the first fruits of the Spirit;" called als
" seal of the Spirit," being the renewal of the d
image on their souls; and the " earnest of the Sp
or the beginning and sure pledge of heavenly felic
But, who can deny that these things are essent
genuine christianity, at all times, and in all place

Finally, we are directed " to pray in" or *by* t
" Holy Ghost," who " also helpeth our infirmit
and whatever words we use, his influences alone
render our worship spiritual. Our holy tempe
fections, and actions, are called " the fruits o
" Spirit,"‡ to distinguish them from mere moral

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* 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18. † 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 13, 14. i
‡ Gal. v. 22, 23. Eph. v. 9.

...t, proceeding from worldly or selfish principles. ...e are said to "live in the Spirit," and "to walk ...in the Spirit," and to "be filled with the Spirit:" ...d all our heavenly wisdom, knowledge, strength, ...liness, joy; all things relative to our repentance, ...ith, hope, love, worship, obedience, meetness for ...aven, and foretastes of it, are constantly ascribed ...his influences: nor can we escape fatal delusions, ...ist temptations, overcome the world, or glorify ...od; except as we are taught, sanctified, strengthen-..., and comforted by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in ... believers "as a well of water springing up into ... everlasting life."

We need not then wonder at the low state into ...hich vital christianity is fallen, when we consider ...ow many nominal christians utterly disclaim all de-...endence on the Spirit, as enthusiasm: and how ...reatly this part of the gospel is overlooked by num-...ers, who are zealous for other doctrines of it. The ...subject, therefore, suggests to us the vast importance ...of owning the divine Person and whole work of the Spirit, in all our services; of praying *for*, that we ...ay pray *by*, the Spirit;* of applying to him, and ...depending on him in all things; of cautiously distin-...guishing his genuine influences from every counter-...eit, by scriptural rules; of avoiding those worldly ...ares, and that indolence which "quench," and all ...hose evil tempers which "grieve, the Spirit of God," ...nd of giving the glory of all the good wrought in us,

* Luke xi. 13.

or by us, to him as its original Source and Author. Thus, depending on the Mercy of the Father, t Atonement of the Son, and the Grace of the Spi we shall be prepared to give glory to the Triune G our Saviour, both now and for evermore.

ESSAY XV.

: *uses of the Moral Law, in Subserviency to the Gospel of Christ.*

EN we have duly considered our situation as creatures, and those things which relate to our ry by the mercy of the Father, the redemption diation of the Son, and the sanctification of the Spirit; we must be convinced that "we are d by grace, through faith; (and that not of our-s, it is the gift of God;) not of works, lest any should boast:"* and under this conviction it ral for us to enquire, "Wherefore then serveth aw?"† What end does it answer? The apostle introduces this question, as the objection of ing teachers to the doctrines of grace: but in the t endeavour to state the *uses of the law* as *sub-t* to *the gospel*, it is necessary to premise, that the *ritual law*, nor the *legal dispensation*, is the former typified, and the latter introduced,

* Eph. ii. 8—10. † Gal. iii. 19.

the clear revelation of the gospel; and they were both superseded and rendered obsolete by the coming of Christ. The *moral law* alone is intended, which was originally written in the heart of man, as created in the image of God; was afterwards delivered with awful solemnity from mount Sinai, in ten commandments; is elsewhere summed up, in the two great commandments of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; and is explained and enlarged upon in a great variety of particular precepts, throughout the whole Scripture. This law, besides what it more directly enjoins, implicitly requires us to love, admire, and adore every discovery, which God shall ever please to make to us of his glorious perfections; cordially to believe every truth which he shall reveal and authenticate; and willingly to obey every positive institution which he shall at any time be pleased to appoint.

This law is immutable in its own nature: for it could not be abrogated, or altered, without an apparent intimation that God was not so glorious, lovely, and excellent; or so worthy of all possible honour, admiration, gratitude, credit, adoration, submission, and obedience, as the law had represented him to be; or without seeming to allow, that man had at length ceased to be under those obligations to God, or to stand in those relations to him and to his neighbour, from which the requirements of the law at first resulted. The moral law, I say, could not be changed in any *essential point*, unless we could cease to be under infinite obligations to our great Creator; unless he could allow us in some degree to be alienated from

him, and despisers of him; or to love worldly objects and our own present advantage or pleasure more than his infinite excellency; and to prefer them to his glory, and the enjoyment of his favour: unless he could allow us to be ungrateful for his benefits, to discredit his veracity, to dispute his authority, to reject the appointments of his wisdom; and to injure, neglect, corrupt, or hate one another, to the confusion, and ruin of his fair creation. Such absurd and dreadful consequences may unanswerably be deduced, from the supposition of the *moral law* of God being repealed or altered: and they are the bane of all Antinomianism; and of every system formed on the absurd notion of a *new* and *milder* law promulgated by Jesus Christ, however ingeniously such schemes may be arranged or diversified. The Lord may, consistently with the immutable perfections of his nature, and the righteousness of his government, reveal truths before unknown: he may abrogate positive institutions, or appoint others: he may order various circumstances relative to the law in a new manner, according to the different situations in which rational agents are placed; but the love of God with all the powers of the soul, and the love of our neighbour as ourselves, must continue the indispensable duty of all reasonble creatures, however circumstanced, through all the ages of eternity.

This law is the foundation of the covenant of works; and it is the wisdom of every holy creature in a state of probation to seek justification by obeying it: but for *fallen men* who are continually *transgressing*, to waste their labour, in vainly attempting to justify

themselves before God by their own obedience, is absurd and arrogant in the greatest conceivable degree. This attempt is generally called *self-righteousness;* and all the preachers of christianity are bound most decidedly to warn men against it, as a fatal rock on which multitudes are continually perishing.

But what purposes then does the moral law answer, under a dispensation of mercy, and in subserviency to the doctrines and the covenant of grace? and what use should the ministers of the New Testament make of it? The following statement may perhaps contain a sufficient reply to these questions; and likewise make way for some observations on the bad effects which follow from ignorance, inattention, or the want of accurate and clear apprehensions, respecting the moral law, in the ministers and professors of the gospel.

1. The moral law, when well understood, is very useful in shewing sinners their need of mercy and free salvation. The apostle says, "I through the law, am "dead to the law, that I might live unto God:"* He doubtless meant, by *being dead to the law*, that he had entirely given up all hope and every thought of justification by the law, or of obtaining eternal life as the reward of his own obedience: and, having fled to Christ for justification, he was also delivered from fear of final condemnation by it. He had therefore no more to hope or fear from the law, than a man after his death has to hope or fear from his friends or enemies. When he was a Pharisee, "he was alive without the "law; but when the commandment came, sin revived

* Gal. ii. 19.

and he died." Every impartial reader must see, that e apostle, in this remarkable passage, spoke exclu-vely of the *moral law*, which he declared to be *holy*, *st*, and *good*, and *spiritual;* to which he "consented that it was good," even while he failed of answering s strict demands; in which he "delighted after the inward man;" and which he "served with his mind,"* or with the decided preference of his dgment, and the habitual purpose of his heart.—Vhen the sinner understands the extensive and spi-tual demands and awful denunciations of the divine w, his hope of being justified according to it must pire: for he perceives that it requires a perfectly oly heart and a perfectly holy life; that it respects ery imagination, affection, motive, word, and work; at it demands absolute, uninterrupted, and perfect edience, from the first dawn of reason to the mo-ent of death; and that it denounces an awful curse "every one, who continueth not in all things, written in its precepts to do them." But unless the *odness* or *excellency* of the law be also discerned, he ill not be brought to genuine self-abasement. A man ay be clearly convicted of high treason, according the letter of the statute: but if he thinks the statute elf iniquitous, he will persist in justifying his con-uct; and his sullen enmity to the prince, the govern-ent, and his judges, will probably increase in pro-rtion, as he sees the execution of the sentence de-unced against him to be inevitable.—If men only nsider the strictness of the precept, and the severi-

* Rom. vii. 7—25.

ty of the sanction, of the divine law; hard thoughts of God will be excited, they will deem themselves justified in desponding inactivity, or they will take refuge in antinomianism or infidelity. But when every precept is undeniably shewn to be "holy, just, and "good," requiring nothing but what is *reasonable*, *equitable*, and *beneficial:* the convictions thus excited strike at the root of man's self-admiration; the sinner is constrained by them to take part with God against himself; and he can no longer withhold his approbation from the law, even whilst he knows himself liable to be condemned by it. For the more clearly the excellency of the precept is perceived; the more evidently do the odiousness, unreasonableness, and desert of sin appear.

The law should therefore be very fully stated, explained, and applied to the consciences of men, for these purposes: as this constitutes the grand means, which the Lord blesses, to shew sinners in what the divine image consisted, after which Adam was at first created,—and what they ought to *have been* and to *have done*, during the whole of their past lives;—and to convince them, that their sins have been exceedingly numerous and heinous, in thought, word, and deed, by 'leaving undone what they ought to have 'done, and doing what they ought not to have done:' —that their present dispositions, and supposed duties, are vile and unworthy of God's acceptance, yea, deserving of his wrath and abhorrence:—and in short, that their case is hopeless and helpless, if they be left to themselves under the old covenant, and dealt with according to the merit and demerit of their works. In

this way the pride of men's hearts is abased, their mouths are stopped, their false and legal confidence is destroyed, and they are prepared by the knowledge of their sins, and by deep humiliation before God, to understand and welcome the salvation of the gospel. Thus the law was delivered from mount Sinai, to prepare the minds of the Israelites for the promises and types of good things to come; and it should be delivered from every pulpit with most awful solemnity, in connexion with the blessed gospel: and in this way of instruction it still proves "a schoolmaster to bring "us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."

2. The law is exceedingly useful *to illustrate the necessity, the nature, and the glory of redemption.* "The Lord is rich in mercy," yea, "he delighteth "in mercy:" why then does he not pardon *all* sinners by a mere act of sovereign grace? What need was there of a Surety, a Redeemer, or an Atonement? Why must God be manifested in the flesh? Why must Emmanuel agonize and die on the cross? Did ever earthly prince require his beloved, his only, his dutiful son, to endure the most intense tortures, in order to the pardon of any number of criminals? This could not be necessary, in order to prevail with God to love and save us: for it is every where spoken of in Scripture, as the most emphatical evidence, and richest fruit, of his love to us. But the Lord is infinitely holy in his nature, and perfectly righteous in his moral government; and he is determined "to magnify his "law and make it honourable." We had by our sins despised and dishonoured the holy law, and rendered

ourselves obnoxious to the just vengeance, of our Creator: if then he spared us, his holiness, his justice, and his law would be disgraced, or at least the glory of them obscured; unless some other decisive methods were taken of magnifying his law, displaying his justice, and filling the world with awful astonishment at his holy hatred of sin. Whilst he therefore makes these things known, by the final misery of some transgressors: he pardons others to the praise of his glorious grace; but in such a way, as still more effectually secures the honour of his law and government. "He "hath set forth his own Son to be a propitiation for "sin; that he might be just, and the justifier of him "that believeth." They, who really believe and understand the scriptural account of this surprising transaction, discern in a measure the necessity of this redemption, its real nature, and the glory of God peculiarly displayed in it; whilst to all others, the "preaching of the cross is foolishness:" And in exact proportion to our views of the excellency of the holy law, will be our admiration of the divine perfections as harmoniously glorified in the gospel.

3. The law is useful, *as a rule of conduct to believers*. When we have fled for refuge to Christ by faith, we are delivered from the curse of the law and from the legal covenant; but we remain subjects of God's moral government, and are bound to obedience by new and most endearing obligations. "Shall we then "sin, because we are not under the law, but under "grace? God forbid." Yet there is no other rule of duty but the moral law, as above defined, and "where

"no law is, there is no transgression." Our blessed Lord, when about to expound, in the most strict and spiritual manner, several precepts of the moral law, solemnly premised these words, "Whosoever there-"fore shall break one of these least commandments, "and teach men so, he shall be called the least in the "kingdom of heaven: but whosoever *shall do and* "*teach them*, the same shall be called great in the "kingdom of heaven;"* that is, among the ministers of his gospel. He says to his disciples, "if ye love "me keep my commandments:"† and what are his commandments, but the precepts of the moral law, enforced on believers by the most powerful and endearing obligations and motives? The apostles continually refer believers to the moral law, as the rule of their conduct; and sometimes quote for this purpose the very words of the ten commandments.‡ "We are "not without law to God, but under the law to "Christ."§ The believer receives the law, deprived of its condemning power, from the hand of the Redeemer, as the rule by which to regulate his tempers, affections, conduct, and conversation, to the honour of the gospel, and the glory of God. "Do we then "make void the law through faith? God forbid! yea "we establish the law."‖ He who truly loves the divine Saviour, and feels the influence of evangelical principles, will greatly desire to know what his Lord

* Matt. v. 19, 20. † John xiv. 15, 21—24. xv. 10—14.
‡ Rom. xiii. 8—10. Gal. v. 13, 14. Eph. vi. 2. Jam. ii. 8—13. iv. 11, 12. 1 John iii. 4.
§ 1 Cor. ix. 21. ‖ Rom. iii. 31.

would have him to do, that "his love may abound in "knowledge, and in all judgment,"* and that he may "not be unwise, but understanding what the will of "the Lord is."† And as there can be no authorized standard and rule of the Lord's will, except his commandments; so, that christian who best understands them will be most completely furnished for every good work: provided his knowledge of the truths and promises of Scripture be equally clear and comprehensive. For though love is both the *principle of obedience* and the *substance of the law;* yet we need more particular direction in expressing our love, and regulating our conduct towards God and man.

4. The law is very useful to believers, as the *test or touchstone of their sincerity.* It is written in the heart of all true christians by the Holy Spirit;‡ so that "they all delight in it after the inward man," "consent to it that it is good," "count all God's com- "mandments in all things to be right," "love and "choose all his precepts," repent of, and mourn for, every sin as a transgression of the law, are grieved and burdened because they "cannot do the things that "they would," and long to love God and man as perfectly as the law requires. The fruits of the Spirit, by which their deliverance from the law as a covenant is sealed, are coincident with the requirements of its holy precepts; the example of Christ, which they are called and inclined to imitate, consisted in a perfect obedi-

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* [illegible] i. 9. † Eph. v. 17. ‡ Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10.

ence to the divine law: the holiness, which they follow after, is no other than conformity to it, as resulting from evangelical principles, and a constant regard to the Redeemer's Person and their obligations to him: nay, the heavenly felicity to which they aspire is the perfection of this conformity; the full enjoyment of God, as the supreme object of their love; and the delight of sharing the happiness of all holy creatures, by loving and being loved by them, without envy, suspicion, fear, or the alloy of any other base and selfish passion. But "the carnal mind," (whether in an infidel, a careless sinner, a pharisee, or a hypocrite,) "is "enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law "of God, neither indeed can be." All *unregenerate* men secretly dislike the strictness and spirituality of the law, and wish to have it abrogated or mitigated: this secret inclination is the source of all antinomian principles; and in this respect, persons of the most opposite sentiments resemble each other; for virulent opposers and loose abusers of the doctrines of grace are alike influenced, both by the pride of self-confidence which is the essence of Pharisaism, and by the enmity to the law which distinguishes the antinomian. On the other hand, the true believer approves of the very precept that condemns his own conduct, and longs to have his own heart changed into conformity to the holy commandment. If then, professors of the gospel were more fully acquainted with the requirements of the divine law, they would be far less exposed to the danger of deceiving themselves, and sincere believers would more clearly perceive, that their mourning for sin and their hatred of it, their tenderness of consci-

ence, and uneasy longings after higher degrees of holiness, than any of which they once had the least conception, constitute a "witness in themselves" of their actual union with Christ, and of their interests in all the blessings of the new covenant. At the same time, a more distinct view of the justice of that awful sentence from which Christ hath redeemed them with his own blood, would, in proportion to their assurance of deliverance and eternal life, animate them to live more entirely devoted to the service of "him who died for them and "rose again."*

5. The knowledge of the law is exceedingly useful to believers, *as a standard of continual self-examination*, to exclude spiritual pride, and to keep the soul at all times abased, and simply dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ. Knowledge, gifts, usefulness, or other attainments, by which men are distinguished from those around them, have a powerful tendency to excite self-complacency and self-preference; but when a believer compares the state of his heart, and the very duties and services he performs, with the spiritual and holy commands of God: he is reminded of his guilt and depravity, and taught his constant need of repentance, forgiveness, the blood of Christ, and the supplies of his grace. Thus, he learns to walk humbly before God, however he may be distinguished among men: to be ashamed of such good works as he would otherwise admire: to count even his evangelical du-

* 2 Cor. v. 14. 15.

s as dross in comparison of Christ and his righ-
usness; to be simple in his dependence on the Lord
all things; and, knowing that he hath not attained,
o press forward to the mark, for the prize of the
high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Having thus compendiously stated some of the
ding uses of the moral law in subserviency to the
spel, it now remains to consider *the bad effects*
ich arise from ignorance, inattention, or the want
accurate and clear apprehensions on this subject,
the ministers and professors of the gospel. We
e suppose that the several doctrines of christianity
stated and apprehended, as fully as they can be,
en the perfect law of God is greatly kept out of
ht: for this must create considerable inconsistency
the best arranged system of evangelical truth. We
serve also, that there are various degrees and kinds
ignorance and inattention to the law, or of a con-
ed and unscriptural way of speaking concerning it.
me persons seem almost to leave it out of their sys-
n, or only to speak of it in depreciating terms: others
vert to its strictness and severity, but they are not
ually sensible of its excellency. Many are acquaint-
with its uses *in convincing men of sin*, but not of
value as *a rule of conduct:* others, on the contrary,
ply its precepts to the regulation of the chris-
n's conduct, but are less habituated to use them for
rming the consciences of unbelievers. But in
portion as any of these uses are neglected, some
other of the following effects may be appre-
ded.

'1. Great numbers of those, who hear and ass
the gospel, will remain destitute of any serious
cern about their souls. Whatever men learn of C
and his love or free salvation; they seldom, if
count him the Pearl of great price, and conse
part with all for his sake, till they are made d
sensible of their danger as lost perishing sinners.
it has been shown that this is the grand scriptural
of bringing them to this conviction. A great
therefore of that want of success, of which some
ministers complain, may fairly be ascribed to thei
ure in this particular.

2. Ignorance of, or inattention to, the law, al
occasions the *prevalence or increase of a self-righ
spirit*. This propensity of our proud hearts is
broken, by perceiving in some measure how j
and certainly the law of God condemns even our
actions; because they are so defective in their m
and measure, and so defiled in themselves: and
we always influenced by a realizing conviction,
'God deems us deserving of final condemnatio
not loving him with all our hearts;' our pronene
rely on our own works could not subsist, but we
draw all our confidence from the grace of the go
All other devices for curing this disease are mere
latives: but the apostle directs us to the radical
when he says, "I, through the law, am dead t
'law."

3. Ignorance of the holy commandments of G
errors respecting them, give occasion to *the*

rease of unsound professors of the gospel, whose scan-
alous lives, or awful apostacies, often disgrace the
ause of truth. If men are allowed to consider the
w of God *as an enemy, from which Christ came to*
eliver them; if they conclude that *their natural dis-*
ke to it is excusable, their inability to keep it a mis-
rtune, and *their condemnation for breaking it an act*
extreme rigour, bordering on injustice; if they sup-
se salvation to consist almost wholly in deliverance
om condemnation, and do not in the least perceive
at all true believers really repent of, and condemn
emselves for, breaking the law; are taught to love
d delight in it, and are both required and inclined
testify the sincerity of their love by unreserved obe-
ence to all its precepts: they will readily embrace a
ctrine which gives relief to their uneasy consciences,
d leaves the favourite lusts of their hearts unmo-
ted. Thus stony-ground hearers who welcome the
spel with impenitent joy, and then in time of temp-
tion fall away, and thorny-ground hearers, who re-
in an unfruitful profession with a worldly, covetous,
sensual life, will abound in the visible church—
d be as Achans in the camp. No care indeed of
an can wholly prevent this; but a clear and distinct
ew of the holy law of God, and its subserviency to
e gospel, is one very important means of prevent-
g such dreadful delusions, and such wide spreading
andals.

4. The prevalence of corrupt and heretical princi-
s originates from the same source. Perhaps it might
e shewn, that all anti-scriptural schemes of religion in

several particulars coincide. They agree in considering the perfect law of God as too strict in its demands, and too severe in its penalty; and in supposing, that it would be inconsistent with the divine justice and goodness, to deal with his rational creatures according to it. None of them allow expressly that Christ died to *honour this law*, and to satisfy the justice of God for our transgressions of it, that he might save sinners without seeming to favour sin: but they suppose his death to have been designed exclusively for some other purposes. Nor do any of them consider a total change of nature and disposition to be absolutely necessary to salvation: but they all explain regeneration to mean something far short of this new creation unto holiness. They, who differ and dispute most eagerly about other points, when their sentiments are carefully examined, are found to harmonize in these. The philosophical Socinian, who rejects the atonement as needless, and eternal punishment as unjust, here agrees with the antinomian or enthusiast, who, boasting of free grace and extraordinary illumination, reviles and tramples on the law which Christ died to magnify and honour. Almost all errors in religion connect with *misapprehensions concerning the law of God;* and the *neglect* of clearly and fully stating this subject, according to the Scriptures, must therefore tend exceedingly to favour the propagation of heretical opinions of various kinds.

A few instances may be mentioned. It would not be so common, as far as we can see, for those, who have been educated in evangelical principles, to diverge into Arian or Socinian sentiments; if such a

eep and clear knowledge of the demands, excel-ncy, and uses of the law, were connected with their iews of human depravity, redemption, justification, ıd regeneration, as might assist them in understanding ıe *real nature* and *necessity* of the great doctrines of ılvation. For want of this when they are pressed by ıbtile reasonings on such subjects, they know not 'hat to answer; and so give up the truth as untenable n rational grounds, instead of perceiving that it has s foundation in the nature of things, in the divine erfections, and in our condition as transgressors, and ; creatures continually propense to transgress.—We ın hardly conceive, that men professing godliness ould ever have fancied themselves *perfectly free from ll sin*, and so have been seduced into a most dis-raceful and injurious kind of self-preference and spi-ıtual pride; if they had been previously well ground-l in the knowledge of the extensive demands of the ivine law.—The mystick, who places the whole of is religion in the internal feelings of his mind, or hat he calls the voice or the moving of the Spirit; hilst the doctrine of the atonement, the life of faith ı a crucified Saviour, the written word, and the means f grace, are contemptuously disregarded by him: and he antinomian, who is satisfied with what he sup-oses Christ has done for him, and perceives no want f a renovation to the divine image, or a personal ho-ness of heart and life; must alike stand confuted, if he real nature, excellency, and uses of the holy law, ere clearly discovered to them. But where this is verlooked, some or other of these perversions of the ospel will insinuate themselves, and prey insensibly

on the vitals of true religion, whatever attempts be made to exclude or eradicate them.

5. Through ignorance of the law, real christians habitually neglect duties, commit sins, or give way to evil tempers, to the discredit of the gospel, and to the hindrance of their own fruitfulness, comfort, and growth in grace. It has frequently happened, that ministers have heard some of their people acknowledge, after receiving practical instructions, that they had not before been sensible, that such or such things were sins; or that this or the other was a duty incumbent on them: nay, the meditation on such subjects has sometimes the same effect on the ministers themselves. The knowledge of the precepts, therefore, is the proper method of rendering believers complete in the will of God "in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and in bringing them "to walk worthy "of God unto all pleasing;"* and consequently, inattention to it must proportionably produce the contrary effects.

Lastly. The Scriptures frequently speak concerning the excellency of God's commandments, in the most emphatical language; and with great earnestness, exhort men to abound in the work of the Lord, and to be zealous of good works: yet many, who profess or preach evangelical truth, speak little on these subjects, except in a depreciating manner: and hence additional prejudices are excited against the doctrines of

* Col. i. 9, 10.

grace, as subversive of holy practice. But if the nature, use, excellency, and necessity, of good works, as the fruits and evidences of true faith, were more fully understood; and the perceptive part of the Bible, in subserviency to the gospel, were more prominent in men's discourses and conduct; such objections would be confuted; and they would "be put to "shame, who should falsely accuse" either our holy doctrine, or "our good conversation in Christ Jesus."

ESSAY XVI.

On the Believer's Warfare and Experience.

THE sacred Scriptures always represent the true christian as a soldier engaged in an arduous warfare, with potent enemies, against whom he is supported, and over whom he is made victorious, by the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, through faith in the Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, and by obedience to his commands. Such expressions as *fighting*, *striving*, and *wrestling;* with frequent and varied allusions to military affairs, imply an experience essentially different from that of those persons, who never engaged in the conflict, or who have already obtained the conqueror's palm: nor can any hope, or even assurance, of victory and triumph, or any intervening seasons of peace and joy, entirely preclude this difference. The distinction therefore, between the church *militant* on earth, and the church *triumphant* in heaven, has on good grounds been established; and they who do not well understand and consider it, are very liable to fall into several injurious, discouraging, disgraceful, or even fatal mistakes. In discussing this subject, we may first briefly consider the distinguish-

principles, purposes, and desires of the persons are engaged in this warfare:—enumerate the ene-, with whom especially they are called to con-—briefly mention the encouragements, supports, aids vouchsafed them; the weapons with which fight, and the manner in which they put on and heir armour:—advert to the nature and effects of victories; and conclude with a few hints on the priate experience that must result from their tion.

Then, we speak not in this place of the whole itude who are called christians, or who profess to ve the Scriptures: neither do we include all, who or dispute for the several doctrines, which form rand peculiarities of the christian faith; nor the e company who compose any peculiar sect or de-nation, to the exclusion of others. In respect of llective bodies, we are, alas! constrained to allow, but *few* comparatively "*strive* to enter in at the ait gate."* A vast majority of all frequent "the ad road that leadeth to destruction," "hold the th in unrighteousness," and "walk according the course of this world." Many indeed observe aliel's cautious advice, and are not openly united those, "who fight against God:" but they aim serve an impracticable and inadmissible neutra-and know nothing of 'fighting under the banner Christ against the world, the flesh, and the devil, of being his faithful soldiers—to the end of

* Matt. vii. 13, 14. Luke xiii. 23—30.

'their lives;' unless they have read or heard of it, i
the form of baptism, or have been taught it from so
orthodox catechism. But the persons of whom th
Essay treats, are those of every name, who,
"obeying the truth," have been "made free fr
"sin, and become the servants of God." Most
them remember the time, when they "were foo
"disobedient, deceived; serving divers lusts a
"pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, a
"hating one another:"* but "God, who is rich
"mercy, of his great love, wherewith he loved the
"even when they were dead in sin, hath quicken
"them."† Thus "being born again, not of corru
"ble seed, but of incorruptible," they were enlig
ened to see something of the glory of God, the e
of sin, the value and danger of their souls, and th
need of mercy, grace, and salvation. They were
fectually warned to flee from the wrath to come,
led to repent and turn to God, to deny ungodli
and worldly lusts, to renounce their former hopes,
to believe in Christ, that they might be justified
faith. Having been thus taught "to count all but lo
"for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ,"
they are prepared to deny themselves, bear the cr
labour, venture, suffer, and part with all, for his
In this manner they have been "delivered from t
"power of darkness, and translated into the king
"of the beloved Son of God;" they separate fr
his enemies, and join themselves to his friends;
throw down the arms of their rebellion, and "put

* Tit. iii. 3—7. † Eph. ii. 1—10.

"the whole armour of God;" they deliberately enlist under the banner of Christ; and they consider his people, cause, and honour, as their own; and his enemies within and around them as equally hostile to them also. Under the conduct of divine grace, these consecrated warriors "strive against sin," seeking the destruction of the kingdom of Satan, in their hearts, and in the world as far as their influence can reach; and do not, when most themselves, so much as entertain one thought of making any peace or truce with the enemies of Christ and of their immortal souls. Holiness, or conformity to the moral perfections and law of God, they deem their health and liberty, and sin their disease, bondage, and misery; they regard themselves as bound, by the strongest and most endearing obligations, to devote themselves wholly to the service of their God and Saviour; they esteem the interests of evangelical truth and vital godliness, as of the utmost importance to the happiness of mankind; and they expect their present comfort, as well as their future felicity, from communion with God and the enjoyment of his favour.

But various inward and outward impediments and obstructions combine to counteract these desires, and to prevent these principles from producing their full effect; and while they struggle to exert themselves notwithstanding this opposition, a *conflict* ensues to which all rational creatures in the universe, who are not thus circumstanced, must of course be strangers; even as none, but soldiers in actual service, experience the dangers, hardships, and sufferings of a military life. The regenerate person as really loves God,

and as really desires to obey, honour, worship, and please him, and for his sake to act properly towards his brethren, as angels in heaven do; and at those times, when his heart is enlarged in holy contemplation, he longs to be perfectly holy, obedient, and spiritual. Then the principles of "the new man," vigorously exert themselves; and the remains of corrupt nature, or of "the old man," lie comparatively dormant; the world is out of sight, or stripped of its attractions; and the enemies of his soul are restrained from assaulting him. But when the christian has left his closet, or the house of God, and is returned to the employments of his station in life, he finds himself unable to realize his previous views, or to accomplish the purposes which he most uprightly formed; and he often wonders to find himself so different a person from what he was a few hours before. This, however, is only *partial* and *temporary:* the better principles implanted in his soul counteract and prevent the effect of corrupt passions and external objects, and shortly resume a more decided ascendancy. So that upon the whole, the believer *successfully opposes* sin, asserts his liberty, and serves God: and his state is determined by this *habitual prevalence;* for "he *walks* not after "the flesh, but after the Spirit."

A conflict of this kind, it may easily be perceived, is a very different thing from the feeble and occasional interruptions, which the unregenerate sometimes experience in following their sinful inclinations. For in this case the habitual disposition of the mind is in favour of sin, and the *opposition* to it only *partial* and *temporary;* but in the former (as it has been ob-

red) the habitual disposition is against sin, and its *valence* is only *partial* and *temporary.* The checks which an unconverted person is sometimes rained, arise merely from convictions of conscience, of consequences, or selfish hopes; while his des and affections are wholly fixed on carnal things, cannot properly be said to have so much as one idea of *spiritual good;* and religion is his task, of ich he performs no more than what his fears or es impose upon him. Yet these very distinct cases often confounded, from which great mischief must ult.

t is however requisite, more particularly to enurate and consider the enemies, whom the christian lier is called to encounter, if we would fully underd the important subject. The apostle, having said, The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit gainst the flesh: and these are contrary the one to he other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye vould;" proceeds to show what are the *works of flesh*, and the *fruits of the spirit;** from which meration it is evident, that *the flesh* signifies our nature as born of Adam's fallen race, with all its pensities animal and intellectual, as they are con-y to the spiritual commands of God; and that *he spirit* as striving against it," signifies the new nciple infused and supported by the Holy Spirit, ewing our souls to holiness, and so teaching, dising, and enabling us to love and serve God: "For

* Gal. v. 17—23.

" that which is born of the flesh is *flesh*, and that " which is born of the Spirit is *spirit*."

If we then carefully examine the nature of man, we shall find, that a disposition to depart from God, and idolatrously to love and seek felicity from the creature, is common to our whole species; and from this general principle, differently modified according to the different constitutions, educations, habits, connexions, or circumstances of men, some are more propense to avarice, some to sensual indulgence, some to ambition, and others to malignant passions, with every possible variation and combination. These propensities, being excited by temptation, gathering force by gratification, triumphing over shame and conscience, and irritated by the interference of those who pursue the same objects, hurry men into every kind of excess: burst forth into all the variety of crimes that have prevailed in every age and nation; and produce all sorts of immorality, and impiety, blasphemy, and other daring offences, against the Almighty Governor of the universe. And as he who attempts to force his way against a torrent, best knows its strength; so none are so well acquainted with the power of corrupt propensities and habits, as they who resolutely endeavour to overcome and extirpate them. When, therefore, holy principles have been implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God, and a man sees the urgent necessity, and feels the ardent desire, of " crucifying " the flesh with its affections and lusts;" then his conflict begins: for pride, anger, envy, malice, avarice, or sensual lusts, being no longer allowed to domineer, abide, like a dethroned tyrant, and have a strong party

in the soul; and consequently they oppose and counteract the best desires and purposes of the believer, and engage him in a perpetual contest. At some times they find him off his guard, and gain a temporary advantage, which makes way for deep repentance; at all times they impede his progress, mingle pollution with his services, and thwart and interrupt his endeavours to glorify God and adorn the gospel. These things are generally most painfully experienced, in respect of such sins as had by any means previously acquired the ascendancy, and in proportion to the degree in which watchfulness and prayer are remitted: but even those evil propensities, from which he before thought himself most free, will be found, on trial, to possess great power in his soul.

The apostle gives us in his own case a very particular account of the christian's conflict with these enemies;* for we may be confident, that no man except the true believer, "delights in the law of God," "serves it with his mind," "hates all sin," and "has a will" to every part of the spiritual service of God: nor can we suppose, that Paul would say, "*I myself*," if he meant another person of an opposite character; or use the *present tense* throughout, if he had referred to his *past* experience in an unconverted state. The whole of the passage most aptly describes the case of a man who loves God and his service, and would obey and glorify him as angels do; but who finds the remainder of evil propensities and habits continually impeding him, and often prevailing

* Rom. vii. 14—25.

against him. He however resolutely maintains the combat with these enemies, as determined if possible to extirpate them; and at the same time he feels himself more pained by the opposition which his sins make to the best desires of his heart, than by all his persecutions or afflictions; and, notwithstanding all, rejoices in the mercy and grace of the gospel, and in the prospect of complete and final deliverance.

Indeed all the falls, defects, complaints, rebukes, chastisements, and professions, of believers, in every part of the Scripture, undeniably imply the same conflict. We read not of any one who explicitly spoke of himself, or was spoken of by others, as *free from all remains of sin*, and *made perfect in holiness*, or as having accomplished his warfare while he lived in this world: we must therefore conclude, that those persons who now profess to have attained to this kind of perfection, are *in this respect* deceived, or use words without a proper attention to their import. If the inward enemy were quite slain, and we could in this sense adopt the words of Christ, "the prince of this "world cometh and hath nothing in me," the rest of our conflict would be comparatively easy: but while this cause still subsists, we must expect at times to have our joys interrupted by sighs, and groans, and tears, and trembling, till we are removed to a better world.

But we should further recollect the apostle's words, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood" only, "but "against principalities, against powers, against the ru- "lers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual

ickedness in high places."* The Scriptures con-
ally lead our thoughts to these invisible enemies,
fallen angels, or evil spirits. A kingdom of dark-
s and iniquity is spoken of, as established under
in the arch-apostate, by vast numbers of his asso-
es in rebellion. These differ in capacity and in-
nce, but are all replete with pride, enmity, en-
deceit, and every detestable propensity: and
r natural sagacity and powers are increased by long
erience in the work of destruction. The entrance
in by Adam's fall is ascribed to their ambition,
y, malice, and subtlety: and ungodly men are uni-
nly considered as their *slaves*, yea as their *children*.
an is called the god and prince of this world: this
serpent "deceiveth the nations," yea, "the whole
orld;" and he "taketh sinners captive at his will."
nversion is stated to consist in "turning men from
atan to God." This "adversary, as a roaring lion,
oeth about, seeking whom he may devour;" and
"transforms himself into an angel of light," to de-
e the unwary. The whole company of evil spirits
represented, as counteracting, by every possible
rt, the endeavours of God's servants to promote
cause; as harrassing those by temptations whom
cannot destroy; and as desiring to sift and as-
t them. They are spoken of as putting into the
ts of men all kinds of wickedness, and as *filling*
r hearts; as being the original authors of all here-
, persecutions, delusions, and apostacies; and in

* Eph. vi. 10—18.

short, "as working in the children of di
"ence."*

We must, therefore, ascribe it wholly to th
tlety of evil spirits, who prosper most when le
pected, that the sadducean spirit of the age
much discarded the language of the oracles o
and has so far prevailed to bring this doctri
contempt. And thus self-wise men are outwi
these segacious deceivers, and then are emplo
them to delude others also into a fatal secu
Were it not for the depravity of our heart
enemies would not have so much power agai
and their suggestions do not excuse our sins,
we *voluntarily* commit. But as they prevail
ceive most fatally the world in general, so be
must expect a severe conflict with them; not
they act by their servants, (such as infidels, p
tors, false teachers, scorners, flatterers, calum
seducers, and many others,) but immediately b
suggestions and assaults. They seem especi
have access to *the imagination;* where they p
such illusions, as excite the corrupt affections
heart, or impose upon the understanding. Thu
draw men into error, by stirring up pride, preju
and lusts, which darken and confuse the judg
They often present such thoughts to the mind,
it with gloom and dejection, or with distr

* 1 Kings xxii. 20—23. Job. i. 6—12. Luke viii. 1
31. John viii. 44. xiii. 2, 27. xiv. 30. Acts v. 3. xxvi. 18
ii. 11. iv. 4. xi. 14. Eph. ii. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 26. 1 John
Rev. xii. 9, 10. xx. 2, 3, 7—10.

s and hard thoughts of God: and by suggesting things which the soul abhors, and by all ima- e contrivances, they tempt men to neglect the of grace, the duties of their several stations, or nprovement of their talents. But enough has aid to show, that we are called to conflict with irits, who know *where* we are most vulnerable, *hen* most off our guard; whose *fiery darts* are ch suited to excite our passions, as the spark is dle the most inflammable matter; who constant- ı to deceive, defile, discourage, or impede our ; and with whom we must expect every day to e, though some are comparatively "*evil days*," they have peculiar advantages in assaulting

ain, the believer is also engaged in an arduous t with this evil world, which is Satan's grand in all his stratagems and assaults. He uses the ; of the world as his baits, or proposed premi- by which to allure men to disobedience: and, ," or some of, "these will I give thee," is still rand argument in his temptations. Nor is this se only when the conduct suggested is evil in and wealth, honour, or pleasure, is annexed to t more commonly he prevails by seducing us n inexpedient or excessive use, or pursuit, of ly things. Thus ambushments are concealed in business, connexion, relation, and recreation, or any; and the world prevails against us, by induc- s to waste our time, to mis-spend what is en- d to us, to omit opportunities of usefulness, and lulge inordinate or idolatrous affection towards

creatures. The *evil things* of the world, as we deem them, are likewise employed by Satan, to deter us from the profession of our faith and the performance of our duty. Thus many are seduced into sinful compliances, and led to renounce or dissemble their religion, lest they should be ridiculed, reproached, forsaken by their friends, or exposed to hardships and persecutions: while they flatter themselves, that this *prudence* will enable them to do the more good, till the event confutes the vain imagination. Near relations, beloved friends, liberal benefactors, admired superiors, as well as powerful opposers, are often in this respect dangerous foes. Riches and poverty, youth and old age, reputation and authority, or the contrary, have each their several snares: while politeness and rude insolence, company and retirement, assault the soul in different ways. These few hints may show, in what the believer's conflict consists, and to what continual dangers it must expose him.

When, indeed, we seriously consider the variety of those obstacles which interrupt our course; the number, power, and malice of our enemies; the sinfulness and treachery of our own hearts; our weakness and our exposed condition; we may well say, "Who is "sufficient for these things?" or what hope is there of their success in this unequal contest? But a proper attention to the Scriptures will convince us, that there is no ground for despondency, or even for discouragement; as the Lord assures us, that he will strengthen, assist, uphold, and never forsake, his redeemed people. We ought not therefore to fear our enemies; because he will be with us; and "if God be for us, who

" can be against us?" Or who can doubt but that "He " who is in us, is greater than he who is in the world?" This was typically intimated in the promises made to Israel, respecting their wars with the Canaanites and other nations, which were shadows and figures of "the " good fight of faith."* We are, therefore, exhorted " to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his " might:" for " they that wait on the Lord, shall re- " new their strength;" and " Jehovah, in whom is " everlasting strength, is become our salvation." All power in heaven and earth is vested in " the LORD " OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." He is " Head over all " things to his church:" and his servants have always found, that, in proportion as they simply trusted in him, " they could do all things," and that " when " they were weak, then were they strong; for the " power of Christ rested upon them."† He restrains and moderates, as he sees good, the assaults of our outward enemies, or confounds their devices, and defeats their deep laid machinations: all providential dispensations are directed by him, nor can any tribulation or temptation pass the bounds he assigns, though all the powers of earth and hell should combine against one feeble saint: while the Holy Spirit communicates strength to our faith, fear, love, hope, patience, and every principle of the new man; imparts strong consolations and heavenly joys; effectually re-

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1 Exod. xiv. 14. Deut. vii. 17—19. xx. 1. Joshua i. 5—7. x. 25, 42. 1 Sam. xiv. 6. 2 Chron. xiv. 11. Is. xli. 10—16. liv. 15—17.

† 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Phil. iv. 13.

strains the energy of corrupt passions, and disposes us to self-denial, to bear the cross, to persevere in well doing; and to dread sin and separation from Christ, or even dishonouring him, more than any other evil that can befal us. Supported, strengthened, and encouraged in this manner, believers have in every age been enabled "to fight the good fight of faith," and to overcome every foe, "by the blood of the Lamb, "and the word of their testimony; and have not loved "their lives unto the death:"* Nay, they have generally acquitted themselves most honourably, when their adversaries were most formidable, and their temptations apparently most invincible: because they were then most simply dependent, and most fervent in praying for the all-sufficient grace of the Lord Jesus, and most stedfast in contemplating his sufferings and the glory that followed.

In order to maintain this conflict, with good hope of success, we must "take to ourselves," and "put "on, the whole armour of God."† Conscious sincerity in our profession of the gospel must be as *the girdle of our loins*, without which we shall be entangled and embarrassed in all our conduct: an habitual obedient regard to our Lord's commands, as the rule of righteousness, must be our *breast-plate* in facing our foes: while a distinct knowledge and cordial reception of "the gospel of peace," and the way of access, pardon, reconciliation, and acceptance in the divine Saviour, must be *the shoes of our feet*, our only effectual preparation for firmly standing our ground, or

* Rev. xii. 11. † Eph. vi. 10—18. 1 Thess. v. 5, 6.

comfortably marching to meet our assailants. Above all, *faith*, or a firm belief of the truths, and reliance on the promises, of God, must be our *shield*, with which we may ward off and extinguish the "fiery "darts of Satan," and prevent their fatal effects. *Hope*, of present support and heavenly felicity, must be as a *helmet* to cover our head in the day of battle; and with the plain testimonies, precepts, promises, and instructions of the word of God, as with *the sword of the Spirit*, we must, after our Lord's example, repel the tempter, and so resist him that he may flee from us. In short, "the weapons of our warfare "are not carnal:" for, worldly wisdom, philosophical reasonings, and our own native strength and resolution, (like Saul's armour when put upon David,) can only encumber us. But when, conscious of our weakness and unworthiness, and distrusting our own hearts, we "strive against sin, looking unto Jesus," relying on his power, truth, and grace, and observing his directions; when we aim to do his will, to seek his glory, and copy his example; then indeed we are armed for the battle: and, however men may despise our weapons, (as Goliath did David the shepherd, with his staff, his sling, and stones;) we shall not be put to shame in the event, but shall be made more than conquerors over every inward and outward foe. This armour is prepared in Christ, "our Wisdom, "Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption," and in "his fulness of grace:" we take it to ourselves by "the prayer of faith," by searching and meditating on the Scriptures, and attendance on the means of grace. By watchfulness, sobriety, habitual circum-

[illegible] and caution, we put it on and keep it bright: [illegible] we are continually prepared for the conflict, [illegible] liable to be surprised unawares, or to fall into [illegible] stratagems of our vigilant enemies:* and when [illegible] we are at peace with our brethren, and pray for, warn, [illegible] counsel, and encourage them also; we fight the good fight, as a part of the great army, which is enlisted under the Redeemer's standard, to wage war against sin, the world, and the powers of darkness.

As far as we are enabled, in this manner, successfully to oppose our own corrupt passions and various temptations, we gain victories which afford us present comfort, lively hopes, and discoveries of the Lord's love to our souls; and hereafter "glory, honour, and immortality." Our Captain assures every one of his soldiers of this inestimable recompence; and if they are slain in the conflict, this will only put them more speedily in possession of the conqueror's crown. In respect of others, our warfare is directed to the encouragement and help of our fellow-soldiers; the salvation, not the destruction, of our fellow sinners; the benefit of all around us; and above all, the honour of our adorable Saviour, by the success of his gospel among men. While our bold profession of the truth, our exemplary conduct, expansive benevolence, fervent prayer, improvement of talents, and unremitted attention to the duties of our several stations, with quietness and prudence as well as zeal, are peculiarly suitable to promote these important ends. The religion of

* Rev. xxii. 11. Luke xxi. 34—36. Rom. xiii. 11—14

Jesus is thus continued from age to age, by the conversion of sinners to the faith: and though the seed of the serpent still bruises the Redeemer's heel, in the sufferings of his people; yet Satan is, as it were, put under the feet of every true christian at death; and Christ will at length finally and completely crush his head, while all his faithful soldiers shall attend his triumphs and share his glory.

It must appear from this compendious view of our conflicts, that all, who are really engaged in them, experience a variety of changing emotions in their minds, to which others remain entire strangers. They must often mourn their ill success, or that of the common cause, or rejoice in the advantages attained or hoped for. Sometimes they are ashamed and alarmed by being baffled, and at others they resume courage and return to the conflict. They always come far short of that entire victory over their appetites, passions, and temptations, to which they aspire; and they cannot therefore be so *calm* as *indifference* would render them. Much self-denial must be required in such a case, and perpetual fears of being surprised by the enemy. Yet their alarms, tears, groans, and complaints, are evidences that they are Christ's disciples; their joys with which "a stranger intermeddleth not," far more than counterbalance their sorrows; and they can often triumph in the assured hope of final victory and felicity, even amidst the hardships and sufferings of the field of battle.

ESSAY XVII.

On the Privileges enjoyed by the True Believer.

THE sacred Oracles continually teach us, that the upright servant of God, notwithstanding his mourning for sin, and all his conflicts, fears, chastisements, and tribulations, is favoured and happy above all other men, even in this present world. And when the apostle observed, that "if in this life only we have "hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable;" he only meant, that if a christian could be deprived of the hope of heaven, and all those earnests, consolations, and lively affections which result from it, his peculiar trials, his tenderness of conscience, his antipathy to sin, and his thirstings after God and holiness, would be superadded to the ordinary burdens of life, without any proportionable counterpoise to them. But as this is not and cannot be the case; so, the christian with the hope of glory and his other peculiar privileges, may be and actually is, in proportion to his diligence and fruitfulness, of all men the most happy. In order to evince this truth, it may be useful to appropriate the present Essay to the consideration of the most distinguished privileges of the real christian,

which no other man in the world can partake of: for they constitute "a joy with which a stranger inter-"meddleth not;" even "the *secret* of the Lord, which "is with them that fear him."* And it may be premised, that a disposition supremely to desire and diligently to seek after *all* these blessings, as the felicity n which our souls delight, and with which they would e satisfied, is one grand evidence that we are actually nterested in them.

I. Every real christian is actually pardoned and stified in the sight of God: and "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered: blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."† Among a number of condemned criminals, that man would be deemed the appiest who had obtained the king's pardon, though thers were more accomplished, or better clothed: for he cheerful hope of his prison-door opening to set im at liberty, and to restore him to the comforts of life, ould render the temporary hardships of his situation lerable; while to the rest the gloom and horrors of e dungeon would be blackened by the dread of the pproaching hour, when they must be brought out of eir cells to an ignominious and agonizing execution. —We all are criminals: death terminates our conement in this vile body, and this evil world: at that portant moment the pardoned sinner rises to heaven

* Ps. xxv. 14 Prov. xiv. 10. Rev. ii. 17.
† Ps. xxxii. 1, 2. Rom. iv. 6—8.

—the unpardoned sinner sinks into hell: and, except as the former has his views darkened by temptation, or by fatherly rebukes for his misconduct; or, as the latter has his fears repressed by infidelity, or dissipated by intoxicating pleasures and pursuits; the very thought of this closing scene and its most interesting consequences, must have a most powerful effect on their respective happiness and misery, even during the uncertain term of their present life. Nothing can be more evident, than that the Scripture declares that all believers are actually pardoned, and completely justified. "There is" says the apostle, "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? "It is Christ that died; yea, rather is risen again, who "is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh "intercession for us."* And our Lord assures us, not only that "he who believeth is not condemned," but also, that "he *hath everlasting life*, and *shall not* "*come into condemnation.*"†

The same privilege was proposed under the old testament:—when the prophet, speaking of repentance and conversion, (the concomitants and evidences of true faith,) says, in the name of Jehovah, "If "the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath "committed, and do that which is lawful and right, "he shall surely live, he shall not die; all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not *be*

* Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34. † John iii. 14—21. v. 24.

" *mentioned unto him.*"* In other places the Lord speaks of " blotting out the sins" of his people, and " remembering them no more," and of " casting " them into the depths of the sea."† The apostle assures us, that " all who believe *are justified* from all " things;" that " the blood of Christ cleanseth from " all sin," and that even little children in Christ, " have their sins forgiven them for his name's sake."‡ So that the forgiveness and justification of believers are stated to be *already past;* and their deliverance from condemnation is not represented as a future contingency, but as secured to them by an irrevocable grant: " Being justified by faith, they have peace with " God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But, though this is the privilege of all true believers without exception; yet the *actual assurance that the blessing belongs to them* is possessed only by some, and only at times even by many of these; for true faith may be very weak; and it may be connected with a confused judgment, a considerable degree of ignorance, many prejudices or mistakes, and sometimes a comparative prevalence of carnal affections. In this case a man may believe with a trembling faith, and cry out with tears, " Lord help my unbelief!" or he may firmly credit the testimony and rely on the promises of God, with a full persuasion of his power and willingness to perform them; and yet doubt

* Ezek. xviii. 21, 22, 27, 28.

† Is. xliii. 25, xliv. 22. Jer. xxxi. 34. Mic. vii. 19. Acts iii. 19.

‡ Acts xiii. 38, 39. 2 Cor v. 19. 1 John i. 7. ii. 12.

whether he do not presume, and deceive himself, in supposing his faith to be saving: and in various ways he may doubt whether he be a true believer, though he do not doubt that Christ will certainly save all true believers. Nay, the frame even of a real christian's mind and the tenour of his conduct may render such doubts reasonable, and the necessary consequence of faith: for if he yield to those evils which the Scripture enumerates as marks of unconversion, the more entirely he credits the divine testimony, the greater reason will he have to call his own state in question; till such time as his convictions have produced a proper effect upon his conduct.—When St. Paul told the Galatians, that "he stood in doubt of them," he meant to induce them to stand in doubt of themselves; and "to examine whether they were in the faith," or whether they had hitherto been deceived. We are, therefore, directed to give diligence both to *obtain*, and *preserve* "the full assurance of hope;"* but this would be superfluous if saving faith consisted in being sure of an interest in Christ; a doctrine which (though incautiously maintained by some very respectable persons,) is evidently suited to discourage feeble believers, and to buoy up the false confidence of hypocrites. In proportion as it becomes manifest, that we are regenerate, that our faith is living, that it works by love and is accompanied by repentance, and that we partake of "the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience;" we may be sure that our sins are pardoned, and that all the promises of God shall be accomplished

* Heb. vi. 11. 2 Pet. i. 10.

to us. Yet misapprehension, and excessive fear of being deceived in a concern of infinite moment, exclude some who have these evidences, from enjoying this assurance, except when immediately favoured with the consolations of the Spirit: while conformity to the world, in this day of outward peace and prosperity, prevents numbers from attaining to that decision of character which warrants it; and, an abatement in diligence and fervency of affection causes others to lose the assurance which once they enjoyed, and to walk in doubt and darkness, because they have grieved their holy Comforter. Hence it appears, that *assurance of salvation* is rather the gracious recompence of a fruitful and diligent profession of the gospel, than the privilege of all who are in a state of acceptance with God. And though all doubts originate *indirectly*, or *remotely*, from unbelief, either total or partial; (for, lively vigorous faith, working by fervent love, would soon disperse them;) yet frequently they are evidences that a man credits the testimony of God, concerning the deceitfulness of the heart, the subtlety of Satan, and the distinct characters of those who are in the broad, and those who are in the narrow, way. These observations are equally applicable to all the other privileges, which we are about to consider: for, in every one of them, the distinction between *a title to the blessing in the sight of God*, and *the actual assurance and enjoyment of it in our own souls*, should be carefully noted: the former is not affected by the believer's varied success in his spiritual warfare; the latter must be continually influenced by the assaults and temptations of the enemy, and by his own conduct *respecting them*.

2. The true christian, as "justified by faith" is "reconciled to God:" a perfect amity succeeds, a covenant of peace and friendship is, as it were, signed and ratified; and he is therefore honoured with the appellation of "the friend of God." When we contemplate the infinite majesty, authority, justice, and holiness of the Lord, and contrast with them our meanness, and the guilt, pollution, and ingratitude with which we are chargeable; when we consider, that he could easily, and might justly, have destroyed us; that we cannot profit him, and that he could have created by his powerful word innumerable millions of nobler creatures to do him service; and when we further advert to the enmity of the carnal mind against his omniscience, omnipotence, holiness, righteousness, truth, and sovereignty, and against his service, his cause, and his people: we shall perceive, that we never can sufficiently admire his marvellous love, and our own unspeakable felicity, in being admitted to this blessed peace and friendship with the God of heaven; which is still more enhanced by the consideration, that "Christ is our Peace," and that "he made peace "through the blood of his cross."* Nor can the advantages resulting from it be sufficiently valued. While believers, by the grace bestowed on them, are taught to love the perfections, servants, cause, truths, precepts and worship of God; to hate the things which he hates; to separate from his enemies; and to seek

* Eph. ii. 14—19. Col. i. 14—22.

erty and felicity in his service: the Lord con-
l kindness or injuries done to them as done
elf; and "will bless those that bless them,
urse those that curse them." All his attri-
hich before seemed with united force to en-
ir destruction, now harmoniously engage
them happy. His wisdom chooses their in-
, his omniscience and omnipresence are their
chful guard, his omnipotence their protector,
city and faithfulness their unfailing security;
ified justice, connected with mercy, vindi-
ir rights, and recompences the fruits of his
nd his bounty surely supplies all their wants.
s the Almighty conceal from his friends the
of his conduct, in such matters as in any re-
ncern them;* and he encourages them to
ir inmost souls, and to pour out their sorrows
, before him: and they can often rejoice that
quainted with those things, which they could
tion even to the dearest and most intimate of
thly friends. But indeed, this privilege of re-
ion to God, and friendship with him, com-
l other blessings and expectations, here and
r: though it may be more instructive to speak
under different heads.

he believer is adopted into the family of God,
itted to all the honour and felicity of his be-
hildren. "Behold what manner of love the

* Gen. xviii. 17—19. John xv. 15.

" Father hath bestowed on us, that we sho
" called the sons of God!"* " According as l
" chosen us in Christ before the foundation
" world, that we should be holy and without
" before him in love; having predestinated us u
" adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto h
" according to the good pleasure of his will,
" praise of the glory of his grace."† He th
thus addresses us by his word, " Come ye ou
" among them, and be ye separate—and I will
" you, and ye shall be my sons and my dau
" saith the Lord almighty."‡ This call being acc
nied by the regenerating power of the Holy Spi
minds are influenced to obey it: thus we are b
to repentance, and faith in Christ, our sins are p
ed, and we pass from the family and kingdom
wicked one, into the household of God, by a gr
adoption.—This term was borrowed from the c
of the ancients, who frequently took the chil
other persons, and by a solemn legal process a
them into their own families, gave them their
educated them as their own, and left them their e
Thus regeneration communicates a divine natu
makes us the children of God; and adoption re
zes us as such, and admits us to the enjoym
the privileges belonging to that relation, and sc
doned rebels become the children and heirs of
mighty and everlasting God, by faith in Jesus Cl

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* 1 John iii. 1. † Eph. i. 3.—14. ‡ 2 Cor. vi. 17,
§ Gal. iii. 26.

what words can express the value of this distinhed privilege! The adoption of the meanest begor the vilest traitor, into the family of the greatest arch to be the heir of all his dignities, would pro- : but a trivial alteration in his circumstances: for, ıtion, sickness, and death would still await him; the distance between the mightiest, and the most :t of men, or creatures, is as nothing compared that which subsists between the great Creator all the works of his hands.*—This adoption is ı mere name; it is a substantial good, an honour, ;nity, and an advantage which eclipses, and, as it :, swallows up, all other benefits, which can be obd by any creature. "If children, then heirs; heirs God, and joint heirs with Christ;" and we may ıre that every thing, which can prepare us for our ruptible and eternal inheritance, and put us in :ssion of it, will be conferred by the love and ıty of our almighty Friend and Father. But "we ow not what we shall be:" "Eye hath not seen, r ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of ın, the things which God hath prepared for them ıt love him." Lest, however, we should imagine ıny possible honour, advantage, or felicity was ɔted, when the inheritance of the children of God nentioned; he hath been pleased to expand our ı, and enlarge our expectations, by language taken all the other most endeared relations of life. The ent disciples of Christ are his brethren, his sis-

* Is. xl. 13—26

ters, and his mother; yea, their "Maker is their hus-"band, the Lord of Hosts is his name!"*

They who are thus adopted into the family of God receive "the Spirit of adoption," instead of the spirit of bondage, and are encouraged to say, "Abba, Father!" or to address him as their Father, whatever language they speak, or to whatever country they belong. We must not understand this expression merely as denoting a confidence that God is our Father: for, believers are often actuated by the spirit of adoption, when harassed with doubts whether they be the children of God or not; and many have an overbearing confidence of their adoption, while their actions demonstrate that they belong to another family.† The Spirit of adoption indeed as properly belongs to the believer's temper and character as to his privileges; yet it is necessary here to observe in general, that the Holy Spirit, by producing in us that disposition towards God, which a dutiful Son, bears towards a wise and good father, manifests our regeneration and adoption, and "bears witness with our spirits, that we are the chil-"dren and heirs of God:" and while we feel our minds habitually influenced to seek to him in all our difficulties; to revere him, trust, love, and obey him; to seek his glory, and rejoice in the success of the gospel and the prosperity of his people; we have "a witness in "ourselves," that we are born of God, and adopted into his family; even though weakness of faith, misapprehension, or temptation, should create a hesitation

* Is. liv. 5. Matt. xii. 46—50. Eph. v. 25—27.
† John viii. 41—47.

in our minds whilst addressing him as our Father. This privilege, therefore, consists in the liberty of approaching the Lord at all times and for all things; of entrusting all our concerns in his hands, and of considering them all as managed by him, in perfect wisdom, truth, and love, for our present and everlasting good. Indeed the very *disposition*, produced by the Spirit of adoption, is our privilege, and constitutes the *seal*, the *first-fruits*, and the *earnest* of our felicity.*

4. The christian has the firmest ground of confidence, that all his temporal wants will be supplied, and that every thing which can possibly conduce to his advantage, will be conferred on him by his almighty Friend and Father. We are not indeed authorised to expect, or allowed to desire, great things for ourselves in this world: and it is evident to every reflecting person, that power, wealth and prosperity tend so much to excite the envy or enmity of others, and to inflame the corrupt passions of their possessors, that they add nothing to the real enjoyment of life. He who has the promise and providence of God, as his security, is far more sure never to want any thing really good for him, than they are who possess the greatest wealth: for riches often strangely "make "themselves wings, and fly away;" but the unchangeable God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, who has all hearts in his hands, can never be unable to provide for those that trust in him. "Bread shall be given

* Rom. viii. 14—17. Gal. iv. 6, 7.

" you, your water shall be sure." " Verily ye shall " be fed." " Your Father knoweth what things ye " have need of;" and " a little which the righteous " hath, is better than the riches of many wicked."* It is then the privilege and duty of every believer, to cast all his cares and burdens " upon the Lord," "to " take no anxious care for the morrow;" to rest satisfied that " the Lord will provide;" and to remember that " he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake " thee." " Having food and raiment, let us be there- " with content," and go on with the duty of our station without any more solicitude than the child feels, who, when learning his lesson or obeying the command of his parents, cheerfully leaves them to provide him food and raiment, and does not encumber his mind with care about such matters.

The believer is indeed allowed and required to expect a *peculiar providential interposition* in all things: he is instructed that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the appointment of his Father, and that "the " very hairs of his head are all numbered." He should consider the place of his abode as determined and guarded by the Lord: and recollect that the holy angels are employed to minister to his good: that he lies down and rises up, goes out and comes in, under this special protection; that no enemies can assault, no calamity befal, no dangers so much as alarm him, except by the appointment or permission of his almighty Father, who " makes a hedge about him and

* Ps. xxiii. 1. xxxiv. 8—10. xxxvii. lxxxiv. 11. Matt. vi. 24—34. Phil. iv. 6, 7.

"all that he has."* No famines, earthquakes, pestilences, fires, wars, massacres, persecutions, or other dreaded catastrophes, can hurt, or should alarm him: for he is safe, and shall be guided, supported, and guarded in all places and circumstances, till the appointed period of his pilgrimage arrive; and then he will be conveyed home to his Father's house, in the best way which infinite wisdom and everlasting love can devise.

Thus "godliness is profitable for all things: having the promise of the life that now is, and of that "which is to come."†

5. Communion with God is the believer's privilege. We "have boldness to enter into the holiest "through the blood of Jesus," and to "come boldly "to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, "and find grace to help in time of need."‡ We are directed to ask what we will, and assured that it shall be given us; for "the prayer of the upright is the "Lord's delight."§ So that we may come with humble confidence, into the immediate presence of our reconciled Father, whenever we will; we may present whatever petitions our wants and circumstances sug-

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* Job i. 10. ii. 3, 7.

† Job v. 19—27. Ps. xci. Rom. viii. 28. 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. 1 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ Heb. iv. 16. x. 19—22.

§ Prov. xvi. 8. Mark xi. 24. Luke xi. 5—13. John xiv. 13, 14. xv. 7, 16. xvi. 23, 24. James i, 5. 1 John iii. 21, 22. v. 14, 15.

gest; we may multiply, repeat, and enforce them with all importunity and earnestness; we may urge every plea, and use all freedom; we may be assured of a cordial welcome in so doing; and confidently expect, that all our petitions will be answered and exceeded, in that sense and way which most conduce to our real good.* Thus we speak to our gracious God, in prayers, supplications, praises, and thanksgivings, notwithstanding that we are "but sinful dust and "ashes;"† and he speaks to us by his word, counselling, warning, instructing, encouraging, or reproving us, and shewing us the way in which we should walk, and the thing which we should do: he evinces his regard to us by answering our prayers, and manifesting his care of us in numerous instances: he discovers his glorious perfections and gracious presence, and "causes his goodness to pass before us;" and he gives sometimes even in deep affliction, "a peace of "God which passeth all understanding, keeping our "hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." For "*truly* "our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son "Jesus Christ," whatever men may think or say of such pretensions; and this happy experience essentially differs from the unscriptural presumption of enthusiasts and hypocrites; though strangers to such joys do and will confound them together.‡ Thus the believer "walks with God" in his ordinances, commandments, and providential dispensations; tastes his love in every comfort, submits to his wise and fatherly correction in every cross, and deems it his privilege

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*Eph. iii. 20. † Gen. xviii. 23—33. ‡ 1 John i. 3.

refer all things to his will and glory: and the Lord alks with him, as his Companion, Guard, and Guide rough life, is with him in the valley of the shadow death, and then takes him home to his more immeate presence.*

6. The believer experiences the consolations of the oly Spirit, in proportion to his faith, simplicity, dilince, and watchfulness. This holy Comforter, who vells in every believer, as in a temple which he hath nsecrated to himself, irradiates the mind by his sad influences to see things that belong to the pern, love, and salvation of Christ; and to know the ssings that "are freely given him of God."† He sists the memory in recollecting the words of the viour: and he invigorates faith, causes hope to ound, enlivens the mind with love and gratitude, d thus communicates a satisfying and sanctifying , the earnest and pledge of heavenly felicity. This nterbalances all trials, dissipates sorrow, fortifies soul against temptation, reconciles it to suffering d self-denial, and animates it for every service. It he privilege of the believer *exclusively* to experice, relish, and value such joys; and to distinguish m from the joy of the hypocrite, which springs m ignorance, pride, and presumption. We are, refore, exhorted "to rejoice in the Lord always;" d all our enfeebling dejection and sorrow are the nsequences of living below our privilege, and co-

* Gen. v. 24.

† John xvi. 15, 16. 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12. Eph. i. 17. 18.

ming short of our duty, in this as well as in other re-
spects. Especially we forfeit and mar this joy, when
we "grieve the Spirit" by our misconduct, or quench
his holy influences by cleaving to the world, or by in-
expedient self-indulgence.* so that the apostle ex-
horts christians, "not to be drunk with wine wherein
"is excess," (from which others seek exhilaration
and relief in trouble,) "but to be filled with the
"Spirit."†

7. It is the believer's privilege "to be kept by the
"power of God, through faith unto salvation."‡ The
actual comfort of this privilege must indeed depend
on our scriptural evidence that we are true believers:
as other men can persevere in nothing except ungod-
liness or hypocrisy. So long, therefore, as any one
doubts whether he be indeed regenerate, he cannot
fully take to himself the comfort of God's promises;
for he cannot *know* that they belong to him: and what-
ever tends to bring his character into suspicion, must
proportionably interrupt his confident hope of final
victory and triumph; which is *only* intended to encou-
rage the valiant soldier, when strenuously resisting his
enemies, and "fighting the good fight of faith." The
words of our Lord, however, are decisive on the point
in question. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know
"them, and they follow me; and I give unto them
"eternal life; and *they shall never perish;* neither
"shall *any one* pluck them out of my hand. My Fa-
"ther which gave them me is greater than all, and

* Eph. iv. 30. 1 Thess. v. 19. † Eph. v. 18. ‡ 1 Pet. i. 5.

no one (οὐδεὶς) is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are One." "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a *well of water springing up unto everlasting life.*" "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* The apostle also sures us that nothing shall ever "separate us from the love of God in Christ;"† and in confirmation his doctrine, he enumerates a variety of those par-:ulars which principally endanger them, in most en-getick and triumphant language. The Lord hath made with them an everlasting covenant," and hath gaged, that "he will not turn away from them to do them good; and that he will put his fear into their hearts, that *they shall not depart* from him."‡ ad this covenant he hath ratified with an oath, for strong consolation of the heirs of promise; even oath, which he sware to Abraham, that in *blessing would bless him*, notwithstanding all possible ob-uctions and objections.§ Indeed, "having chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world," quickened them by his grace "when dead in sin;" might reasonably be expected, that the same sove-gn and everlasting mercy would influence him to p them to complete salvation, by strength propor-ed to all their trials and temptations.

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* Luke xii. 32. John iv. 14. x. 27—30.

† Rom. viii. 35—39.

‡ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Jer. xxxii. 38—40. Ps. ciii. 17. Is. liv. 9, 17.

§ Heb. vi. 16—18.

We might likewise mention, as separate privileges, the assurance, that "all things work together for good "to them that love God," and combine to promote their everlasting advantage, however painful or humiliating for the present; so that they are more than conquerors over all enemies, and are benefited by all their assaults: that death is their friend, and that his dreaded stroke only liberates them from bondage, and so proves their greatest gain:* and that the Everlasting God is their Portion, and their all-sufficient and all-satisfying felicity.

But here silent contemplation best becomes us; and with this let us close these hints on a subject that is nearly inexhaustible. Enough has been said to shew, that true wisdom consists in leaving, venturing, or suffering, any thing to secure such advantages; and in giving diligence to possess the assurance that they belong to us: that, if we lived up to our privileges, "the joy of the Lord would be our strength" for every service; and our cheerfulness and conscientiousness would "concur in adorning the doctrine of God "our Saviour:" and that our dejections arise, not from our religion, but from our want of more faith, hope, love, and all those things in which true godliness consists.

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* Rom. viii. 28—31. 1 Cor. xv. 55—58.

ESSAY XVIII.

On the disposition and character, peculiar to the true Believer.

WHEN our Lord concluded his pathetick exhortations to his disconsolate disciples, just before his crucifixion, by a comprehensive prayer for them; he made this one of his petitions to the Father in their behalf, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is "truth:"* and the scriptures always represent divine truth, as *the seed* in the believer's heart of every holy disposition; *the graft* through which "the tree is "made good and its fruit good;" and *the mould* into which the soul is cast, and from which it receives its form and exact impression, as the metal is fashioned by the artist's skill:† so that we are not only "*justi-*"*fied* by faith," but also "sanctified by faith."‡ The doctrine of Christ dwells in *the regenerate soul*, as an operative transforming principle, producing a peculiar

* John xvii. 17. † Rom. vi. 17. ‡ Acts xxvi. 18.

state of the judgment, will, and affections, in proportion to the degree in which it is understood and believed. This may properly be called the *christian temper*. It is the exact counterpart of the truths by which it is produced; it distinguishes the real believer from all other men; and it constitutes the standard of our proficiency in vital godliness, of our "growth in "grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Sa- "viour Jesus Christ." Alas! a great part of the acquaintance, that most have formed with the truths of revelation, is merely *notional:* and if we do not perceive the *genuine nature and tendency* of the doctrines to which we assent, they must fail to exert their transforming efficacy on our hearts. Thus "knowledge "puffeth up," even when the things known are evidently suited to produce the deepest humility; and though they never fail to have this effect, where they are received by a living faith as the nutriment and medicine of the soul. It may, therefore, be proper to consider more particularly those dispositions and affections, which constitute the appropriate temper and character of the true believer; adverting, as we proceed, to the truths by which they are produced and nourished; and endeavouring to distinguish between the lamented failures and imperfections of the upright, and the allowed and indulged evils of the mere hypocrite or self-deceiver.

1. *Humility* may be considered as most essential to the christian temper, and as radical to every part of it. The believer's principles continually present to his mind the greatness and majesty of God, and the com-

parative meanness of all creatures; which cannot fail to abate his natural propensity to self-importance and self-exaltation, and to make him feel himself as nothing before the infinite Creator. Having received his being and all he possesses, from the hand of God, and holding every thing in the most absolute dependence on him, he cannot *consistently* "glory as though "he had not received them." He knows that every benefit lays him under obligation; that every talent demands a proportionable improvement; and that he must shortly be removed from his stewardship, and required to give an account of it: and he is conscious, that he has not been duly faithful to his trust, or properly improved the talents committed to his charge. This teaches him that all those things, of which he has been tempted to be proud, ought to cover him with shame, and increase his humility; for they have all proved occasions of additional transgression, and thus call upon him to repent, and deprecate the wrath of his offended Lord.

His principles also lead him to compare his conduct with the perfect law of God, and not with the examples and maxims of this sinful world; and to condemn every deviation from that strict and spiritual rule, even in thought or inclination, as sin, and as deserving the divine displeasure and abhorrence: so that every part of his past and present behaviour suggests to him reasons for self-abasement; for sin mixes with and defiles even his best duties, and he feels his need of repentance, of mercy, and of the atoning blood, in every action of his life. He is deeply convinced, that "it is of the Lord's mercies he is not consumed;" all

his hopes of acceptance and happiness spring from faith in the Lamb of God and his expiatory sacrifice; and he receives every comfort, not only as the gift of God's bounty, but as purchased by his Redeemer for a hell-deserving sinner: and how can he, who lives under the influence of these principles, be proud of his possessions or attainments? He dares not venture even to the mercy seat of a forgiving God, except in the name of his beloved Son; and he deems it an invaluable favour, that he may be allowed thus to pray for mercy and salvation. Indeed he cannot in general but perceive that he differs from ungodly men, and from himself in former years; but he knows that this difference is the effect of a divine influence on his mind: so that he sees abundant reason for thankfulness, but none for pride and self-complacency. Nay, he is sensible, that he has been kept from the gross immoralities, which render numbers equally mischievous and wretched, by a divine interposition, in various ways restraining him from listening to temptation, or following the devices of his own heart; so that his preservation is rather an occasion for gratitude, than for self-preference; whilst his misconduct in less scandalous instances seems to him to be baser, when compared with his advantages, than the crimes of unhappy outcasts from human society.

As he frequently and carefully views himself in the glass of the holy law, and diligently compares his whole behaviour with the perfect example of Christ; as he attentively considers his obligations and opportunities, and examines strictly his motives, affections, thoughts, words, and actions; and as he is severe in

ng himself, and candid in estimating the conduct brethren: so he is unavoidably led in his best , to "esteem others better than himself," and ıonour to perfer them."* Thus he is habitually ɜed to take the lowest place, instead of ambi- y aspiring to pre-eminence: for this haughty always results from the want of consistency with elical principles. He also entertains a deep sense own ignorance and proneness to mistake; for perience and observation confirm the declara- of Scripture in this respect; hence originates a *ıble disposition;* a willingness to "receive the gdom of God as a little child," and "to become ɔol" in order to obtain true wisdom. The most ɪnt saints have, therefore, always most sensibly nd frankly owned, their want of wisdom; and most ready to ask it of God,† and to enquire his ıt every step, with the greatest simplicity and ır. And though the well-instructed believer will call any man father upon earth," or implicitly the instructions of any uninspired person, but ring every opinion and counsel to the touchstone ıd's word: yet he will be always learning, even his inferiors, his enemies, or false accusers; be- lad of a little additional light on his path from uarter. And while he considers the written word complete rule of truth and duty, and decidedly s both the traditions of men, and the effusions of siasm; he feels his need of divine teaching to re his mind for receiving and using the light of

* Rom. xii. Phil. ii. 3. † Jam. i. 5.

revelation, whatever means he employs in orde understand it; and continues a learner to the en his days, as his only security against the artifice Satan and the devices of false teachers.

In like manner, the consistent christian is hum sensible of his own *weakness;* and, when actually fluenced by his principles, he will not dare to s "Though all men deny thee, yet will not I;" but ther, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe;" "L "me not into temptation;" "Hold up my going "thy ways, that my footsteps slip not." Experie has convinced him "that when he is weak, then is "strong;" and that "when he thinks he stands," has most cause to "take heed lest he should fall" that he is conscious, that he has no power in himse either to resist temptations, endure tribulations, f dangers, or perform duties; and that he can only " "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Thus simplicity of dependence on God for teachi assistance, protection, forgiveness, sanctification, a perseverance, and complete salvation, are produc and maintained: he becomes more and more *poor spirit*, and a constant pensioner on the Lord in circumstances and on all occasions. It is true t even this peculiarity of the true believer partakes that imperfection, which pervades his whole char ter; and he often betrays, and is "humbled for, t "pride of his heart," and continually laments his pron ness to self-exaltation: yet all "boasting is" habitual "excluded" from his heart and lips; with self-pref

* 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Eph. vi. 10. Phil. iv. 13.

self-admiration, and contempt of others. In short,
e varied workings of ambition, arrogance, vain-
, and envy, with the numerous evils of which
is the prolifick parent, are hated, opposed, mor-
, and crucified; and a lowly, contrite, and sub-
ve spirit is gradually formed, both in respect of
his brethren, and his fellow creatures. Every
of the christian temper and character depends on
and springs from it as from its proper root: and
erson is not much conversant in the Scriptures,
has not observed, that more is there spoken in
bation of this, and more encouraging promises
ade to it, than any other part of that "holiness,
thout which no man shall see the Lord:" for,
e resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the
mble."* All notions, gifts, and experiences,
h consist with prevailing and habitual pride, am-
, self-exaltation, boasting, and contempt of
s, are radically defective; and give cause to sus-
that they are wholly detached from the power of
ness, and the special grace of the regenerating
t of Christ, however splendid they may appear in
yes of superficial observers.

Another essential branch of the christian temper
be comprised in the word *submission*. "Submit
rselves to God," says the apostle; and that view
e divine perfections, law, government, and grace,
h springs from evangelical principles, tends to
teract and crucify the self-will and the desire of

. lvii 15. lxvi. 2. Luke xviii. 14. Jam. iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5.

the believing mind, tends to produce a wil
submit the understanding to the teaching o
instead of hankering after the forbidden f
tree of knowledge, or counting it more ple
quire knowledge for ourselves by the suf
our own powers; it leads us to submit, as
to his tutor, to believe what the Lord te
to rest satisfied with it; leaving secret thi
belong to him, and thankfully using reveal
as the "light of our feet, and the lante
"paths."—The same principles tend to
submission to the will and authority of Go
his service perfect freedom, his command
grievous, his yoke easy, and his ways
of peace and pleasantness.—*Submission t*
teousness springs from the same source
who truly believes the word of God, will
become more and more unreserved in a
justice, in the sentence of condemnation whi
passed on sinners in general, and on him in
In consequence of this he will also *submit t*

ces, as appointed means of grace made efficacious by his blessing; and as acts of worship, by which we are required to render to him, in a measure, "the honour "due to his name." And finally, the same principles tend to produce habitual *submission to his providence* in respect of our outward situation and provision; and of those appointments and regulations, by which he hath been pleased to restrain vice, and to promote peace and good order in human society; "giving honour to "whom honour is due," "and submitting to every "ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."—This is a duty of vast extent; and the disposition habitually to aim at it, and, when we have failed, to return to it in every particular, is peculiar to those who are born of God; while all the opposition of our hearts to it arises from the remaining pride and self-will of our fallen nature, and is a proof that we have not hitherto been fully influenced by our principles.

But *patience*, *contentment*, and *acquiescence in the will of God respecting us*; constitute so important a part of the christian temper, that they require a more particular consideration: and, when genuine, they are so invariably connected with submission to God in all other respects, that, wherever any appearances of them are found, wholly separated from it, we may be sure they are mere counterfeits, the result of natural insensibility, affected apathy, thoughtless indolence, or presumptuous obduracy. Evangelical principles, by inculcating the doctrine of our entire unworthiness, effectually induce the conviction that we all enjoy more than we deserve, and suffer less

than is due to our sins; so that as far as we are influenced by them they must silence our rebellious murmurs and repinings against God. They lead us likewise entirely to trace every event to his appointment, as the first cause of all our trials: that thus they tend directly to counteract our propensity to despise his chastenings, or to vent our uneasiness under trouble, by expressions of anger againt instruments and second causes. They likewise give us such ground for confidence in the mercy, truth, power, and love of God, and for the animating hope of future happiness, as suffices to support the soul, and to preserve us from fainting or desponding under divine rebukes: whilst the persuasion that infinite wisdom and everlasting love have chosen, and will overrule, every event for our more important good, is suited to produce a rational, reflecting, and abiding acquiescence in the will of our heavenly Father. The Lord has many wise and kind reasons for allotting to his people such things, as they would never have chosen for themselves: and if they knew the whole intent of his most painful dispensations, they would certainly approve of them: for every affliction is medicinal, and conducive to sanctification. Thus the christian's principles lead him to consider his station, abode, employment, provision, trials, losses, disappointments, and vexations, as "the "will of God concerning him:" and this induces him to acquiesce in them. He "learns in the school of "Christ, in whatever state he is, therewith to be con-"tent;" and as far as he acts consistently with his judgment, he views every dispensation in a favourable light, and realizes the paradox, "sorrowful, yet always

ejoicing." He seeks comfort from God, when other ıforts are withdrawn: and he is taught to wait his e for deliverance, by "patient continuance in well oing;" without using any sinful expedients, or erting his path or his work to escape the cross. He ts for trouble as long as he continues on earth: he ems sin to be a greater evil than affliction: and in character, sufferings, patience, and glory of his ne Saviour, he finds every instruction explained, every argument enforced, by which resignation, fidence in God, and joy in tribulations, are incul- d. Indeed in this, as in all other respects, the be- er is conscious that he comes far short of his per- rule and example: and this covers him with shame, excites his earnest prayers for mercy and grace: his views tend to render him cheerful at all times in all circumstances; as they give the fullest as- ınce, that every event will conduce to the final and nal good of all who love God. So that all the dis- ragement, despondency, and disquietude of reli- ıs persons spring from other causes, and are di- ly contrary to their principles. A humble confi- ce in God, in respect of the future, is also of great ortance; but it has been particularly considered as of the *believer's privileges*,* and need not further liscussed in this place: for indeed our duties and privileges are seldom more distinct, than the same ect viewed in different lights, or the same idea ex- ısed by different terms.

* Essay xvii.

3. The *fear of God* is another branch of the christian temper, which evidently results from the principles of revelation. There is indeed a slavish "fear "which hath torment," and which is "cast out" by holy love, as far as it prevails:* but we hear speak of that reverential fear of the divine majesty, authority, holiness, and glory, which produces solemn awe, humble adoration, and a serious reflecting frame of mind; which leads a man habitually to act as in the presence of the all-seeing and heart-searching God, and influences him to universal conscientiousness, even in his most secret actions, and in respect of his inmost thoughts; which teaches him to regard with profound veneration the name, word, works, decrees, and judgments of the Lord; which helps to constitute the upright spiritual worshipper in all his ordinances; and which induces the believer to fear the frown, and desire the favour, of God above all other things. This "fear of God" is the effect of special grace, grows in harmony with holy love, and will be perfected with it; when the christian shall join the company and worship of Seraphim before the throne.† Every truth of revelation concurs in giving us those views of God and of ourselves, that are suited to produce this *reverential spirit:* the total want of it, therefore, must evince that the high affections of many persons are false, and their overbearing confidence unwarranted; and that man must be very imperfectly acquainted with evangelical principles, or but partially influenced by them, who is greatly deficient in it.

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* John iv. 18. † Ps. lxxxix. 7. Is. vi. 1—8. Heb. xii. 28.

. *The love of God* is essential to the christian ıper: but it must be briefly discussed in this place: n many things it coincides with the first table of law, which has been already explained.* The hs of the gospel, when received by living faith into regenerate heart, are peculiarly suited to excite increase admiring love of the divine perfections, lisplayed in all the works of God, but especially in : of redemption by Jesus Christ: and hence arise ent desires after that felicity, which is found in templating his glory and enjoying his love. The l begins "to be athirst for God;" and in propor- to the prevalence of this holy affection for the ıreme Good, all inferior objects lose their attrac- ıs: so that, when the believer fears lest he should obtain the happiness of the beatifick vision, but ıld at last be banished from the presence of God, :an take no pleasure in worldly prosperity: when communion with God is interrupted, all other joys n insipid; but the light of His countenance gilds :y object, alleviates every trouble, and enhances :y comfort.—Lively gratitude for mercies inesti- ıle, inexpressible, and unmerited, keeps pace with hope of acceptance; and he cannot but most ear- ly enquire, "what he shall render to the Lord ır all his benefits?"—The same views produce for the glory of God and the honour of the gos- and the believer is habitually disposed to consi- what effect his conduct may have in this respect he minds of men; whence humiliation, circum-

* Essay iv.

spection and care to improve his talents, must always arise.—In all these affections and dispositions there will be a particular regard for the Person of Christ, as One with the Father and the divine Spirit, and the equal Object of all love, confidence, honour, gratitude, and adoration;* and an habitual disposition to meditate on his sufferings and love; to rejoice in his exaltation, and in the success of his gospel; and to desire that his name should every where be known, trusted, and loved, and that his people should prosper and be happy. This love of Christ is the grand constraining principle of all evangelical obedience and devoted subjection to him who bought us with his blood: and the several dispositions towards God, which have been enumerated, constitute the *spirit of adoption;* for when we have in this manner the temper of children towards God, the Holy Spirit bears witness, according to the Scripture, that he is our Father, and that we are his sons and daughters, the regenerated and adopted heirs of his heavenly inheritance.

5. The true believer is *spiritually minded;* that is, he is disposed to seek his happiness in spiritual things, because he is capable of relishing and delighting in them. Others may have a task of religion; but the world is their element, in which they live as much as their consciences will allow them; whereas the believer "has tasted that the Lord is gracious;" "he "remembers his love more than wine;" and "his

* Essays vi. vii. xiii.

"soul has been satisfied, as with marrow and fatness, "whilst he praised the Lord with joyful lips." In proportion, therefore, as he acts consistently with his principles, he either finds joy and pleasure in communion with God and in doing his will, or else he mourns after him. He feels that he must be miserable, unless "God, his exceeding joy," vouchsafe to make him happy: he separates from many companies and pursuits, to spend his time in his closet, in the house of God, or in the communion of the saints; not only from a sense of duty, but in order to enjoy his most valued pleasures, and to avoid whatever may interrupt them; and when he cannot find comfort in this way, and is tempted to seek it in the world, he is ready to say "Lord, to whom shall I go; thou hast "the words of eternal life." This is an essential part of the christian temper; for all attachment to worldly trifles arises from our not being duly influenced by our principles; and as far as we act consistently, we shall attend to the lawful concerns, and use the allowed comforts of life in a sanctified and holy manner.

But a very copious subject yet remains: the temper of the believer towards his brethren and neighbours is equally worthy of our attention. Many things indeed, which might be here adduced, will occur to us, when relative duties come under consideration. It is, however, too copious and important a topick to be comprised in a very small compass; it will therefore be more expedient to continue the subject in another Essay, and to conclude at present with some brief observations on what hath been said.

1. Then; Every attentive and impartial reader must perceive, even from this imperfect sketch, that revelation is *principally* intended to lead men to proper thoughts of God, and suitable dispositions and affections towards him. They, who suppose the precepts, which relate to the conduct of men towards one another, to be the most important and valuable part of Scripture, certainly mistake the leading intent of it; for *godliness*, (or a disposition to behave towards God according to the glory of his perfections, and our relations and obligations to him,) is the first object, both in the commandments of the law, and in the doctrines and promises of the gospel; and the sins, against which the Lord always expresses the most vehement indignation, (such as atheism, idolatry, apostacy, unbelief, enmity against him, contempt and forgetfulness of him, profaneness and blasphemy,) may be habitually committed by persons who from selfish principles are honest, sincere, benevolent, temperate, and peaceable. These things, however, will not excuse hatred and neglect of their infinitely glorious Creator and Benefactor. Indeed a man cannot be *godly* who is not *moral;* because we are required to express our regard to God, by behaving well to our brethren and neighbours: but he may be *moral*, as far as his *outward* conduct towards men is concerned, and yet be destitute of *godliness*.

2. The principal value even of divine truth consists in its sanctifying efficacy on the mind. Many "*imprison* the truth in unrighteousness:" even the doctrines of the gospel are often professed and contended for, with such arrogance, irreverence, and

ceness, that it is plain they are not *principles* in the rt meliorating the disposition: but mere *notions* in understanding, serving as an occasion of gratify- malignant passions, advancing worldly interests, rendering men conspicuous among their neigh- rs: and sensible persons observing this, imbibe ng and fatal prejudices against the truth, through manifest misconduct of these advocates for it.

3. Even the smallest degree, in which the doctrines the gospel operate as principles, transforming the l into their own holy nature, suffices to prove that y have been received with a measure of living h: yet the Lord hath so arranged his plan, that va- rs circumstances concur, in preventing the believer m deriving a *strong scriptural* assurance from a *ble* effect of truth upon his mind. But in propor- n as our principles induce us habitually to "exer- ise ourselves unto godliness," the certainty of the nge becomes evident, our faith is proved to be ng and to work by love, and the holy Spirit thus nesses with our "spirits that we are the children f God:" yet this is generally connected with deep niliation for the small degree in which we are sanc- ed.

4. Finally, our rule is perfect, and grace teaches to aim at perfection: but we are still in a state of fare and imperfection, in which "repentance to- wards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," continue to be necessary. "Blessed," then, "are ey, who *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness: for ey," and they only, "shall be" eternally "satis- ed."

ESSAY XIX.

The subject continued.

IN stating with brevity, yet with some degree of precision, the peculiarities of the christian temper and character, as produced, under the powerful influences of the holy Spirit, from the seed of divine truth received into the heart by living faith, we shall sometimes be led to *deduce coincident parts of them from different principles;* some things therefore which were touched upon in the former Essay, may be here again resumed in another connexion. This will especially be perceived in relation to that subject, with which I shall introduce the delineation of the christian temper, as it more particularly respects our brethren and neighbours; viz.

1. *Indifference to the world and the things of the world.** Patience, contentment, gratitude, and cheerfulness have been shewn to be the genuine effect of that

* 1 John ii. 15—17.

confidence in God and submission to his will, which arise from a real belief of the doctrines contained in the holy Scripture: but they receive a collateral support also from just views of the vanity of all earthly things, and the importance of eternity; whilst these are likewise essential to a proper frame of mind and tenour of conduct towards our neighbours. For what is most productive of immorality and mischief among mankind? Does not an *inordinate eagerness in the pursuits of worldly objects* occasion a vast proportion of the crimes and miseries that fill the earth? This has not only led men idolatrously to forsake God, and wilfully to rebel against him: but it has also prompted them to become the oppressors and murderers of each other, in every age and nation; and thus to fill the earth with "lamentations, and mourning, "and woe." Nor can it reasonably be expected that any effectual remedy will ever be applied to these evils; unless men can be generally convinced, that the objects of their fierce contentions are mere "vanity and "vexation of spirit," and that nobler blessings are attainable. This has been so obvious to reflecting minds, that many sects of philosophers, and the inventors of various superstitions, have in this respect manifestly proposed the same end as christianity does: but the means have been so injudicious and inadequate, that they have only taught their followers to sacrifice one evil propensity to another; and to restrain sensuality or avarice, that they might more advantageously gratify the lust of dominion, or thirst for human applause.

But when the apostle exclaimed, "God forbid that "I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus "Christ;" he subjoined, "*by whom* the world is cru-

"cified unto me, and I unto the world."* The world and every thing in it; "even the lust of the flesh, the "lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" and whatever was suited to gratify the appetites, the senses, the avarice, the ambition, or the vain-glory of man, seemed to him no more attractive, than the distorted defiled countenance of a crucified malefactor: while he was also entirely willing to be looked upon by all worldly men, with that contempt, pity, or aversion which such an object is suited to inspire. Indeed, the doctrines that relate to the incarnation of Christ; the birth of Emmanuel in a stable; his obscure education, and life of labour till he entered on his publick ministry; his subsequent poverty, hardship, reproach and suffering, till he expired a sinless sacrifice on the cross; together with the circumstances of his followers, and the treatment which they met with, are directly suited to mortify every corrupt affection of the human heart, and to create an indifference about all those objects which unbelievers idolize. The doctrine of the cross, when spiritually understood, give us such a view of the deplorable condition into which sin hath plunged our species, and of the hopeless misery to which the most prosperous ungodly man is every moment exposed, as must tend to lower all earthly distinctions in the believer's estimation; and to break the fatal association in his mind between the ideas of happiness and of worldly prosperity: for he cannot but see that a confluence of all earthly comforts does not in the least avail to preserve the possessor from death and hell, or even to

* Gal. vi. 14.

p off the dread of them. That near view likewise, ich faith presents to the mind, of the reality and edy approach of an eternal and unchangeable state, not but damp his ardour and abate his assiduity, in suing those things which must so soon be left for r; whilst the substantial possessions, the incorrupti- honours, and the unalloyed pleasures, which are posed to his hope, tend to draw off his affections n " things on the earth," and to fix them " on ings above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand f God."* For, as this globe appears to us, who on its surface, to be very *unequal* by the inter- nge of mountains and valleys, yet, could we rise ve it and view these at a distance, such *inequalities* ld appear inconsiderable compared with its vast gnitude; and as we looked down upon it from a greater and greater distance, they would by de- es entirely vanish from our sight: so, to the carnal d, the difference between rich, and poor, prince, beggar, seems immense; but, in proportion as our gment and affections become spiritual, the dis- ity diminishes, till the distinction seems wholly to ppear. All are *sinners* and *mortals;* all must stand ore the impartial tribunal of God; all are under demnation according to the law; all are invited to pt of the salvation of the gospel; and all must be nally happy, or miserable, as they are found in the pany of believers, or of unbelievers. Thus, in- erence to the world and its honours, friendship, lth, decorations, splendour and indulgences, whe-

* 2 Cor. iv. 18. Col. iii. 1—4.

ther of the senses, the appetites, or the passions of the mind, is the genuine result of evangelical principles: it is uniformly proportioned to the degree in which we are really influenced by them: and every tendency to coveteousness, ambition, or vain-glory; and all dissatisfaction with a mean or precarious provision, or the desire of things more elegant or luxurious than those which Providence has allotted to us, is a proof that we are not fully cast into the mould of the truths which we profess. A christian is a stranger and a pilgrim upon earth; he wants accommodation during his abode in this foreign land and his journey to his heavenly home; and he cannot but prefer things pleasant to those which are painful: yet this is not his object, nor can he *consistently* loiter, turn aside, or disquiet himself about such matters; much less can he seek great things at the expence of disobeying his Lord, disgracing his own character, or interrupting his own comforts. There is indeed a certain place assigned to him in society; and perhaps he cannot fill this place with propriety, without some externals which are of little value, and which many of his brethren have not: but he cannot *consistently* glory or rejoice in them, or prefer himself to others on that account; nay, he will rather deem them snares and encumbrances, which may retard his course, and seduce him into conformity to the world. His duty may also call him to fill up a superior situation in society, and to possess authority or wealth, as the steward of God for the good of others; or he may be engaged in any lawful business. but his principles will render him superior to the love of the world, and teach him moderation both in the

pursuit of apparent advantages, and in the use of his possessions; they will dispose him to abstain from many things which others in similar situations seize or indulge in, to shun what others deem desirable, and to consider the concessions which he makes to the customs of society, rather as a cross than as a satisfaction. Christianity, indeed, is very far from confounding the different ranks and orders in the community; and it does not at all countenance self-invented austerities, or a morose rejection of the rational comforts and satisfactions of life; for the Lord "hath given us "all things richly to enjoy;" but it teaches us to "be satisfied with such things as we have," if these be merely, "food and raiment," though the meanest and most scanty; to refrain from every thing inexpedient, as well as from whatever is unlawful; and not to put any interest or indulgence in competition with the peace and comfort of our weakest brother. It instructs us to consider no earthly distinction, as our riches, adorning, honour, or pleasure; but to use all things as strangers who are about to leave them; to do all as the Lord's servants, and to improve every advantage as his stewards; and thus "whether we eat or "drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of "God." Whenever these ends require it, we are called upon to deny ourselves, to forsake all, to act as if we hated our dearest relatives, to part with every earthly possession, to take up our cross, and even to lay down our lives for the sake of him who died for us and rose again: and he has expressly declared, that without this disposition, purpose, and conduct, we cannot be his disciples; while he has given motives

and assurances sufficient to encourage us to make all these sacrifices with cheerfulness."* "Seek ye first," says he, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness, "and all these things shall be added unto you:"† a sufficient warrant to trust in the path of duty, both in respect of ourselves and of all that belong to us.

Our principles likewise teach us to consider this world as a barren land and a scene of trouble, and to expect no rest in it; to take things as we find them, (except as the duty of our station may be concerned;) and not to be anxious about our condition, though we be poor or even enslaved: because "the fashion of "this world passeth away."‡ All discontent in obscure and indigent circumstances, as well as insolence in prosperity: all envy of the rich and renowned; all coveting or hankering after somewhat greater, easier, or more abundant; all eagerness in pursuing and seeking worldly advantages; all sanguine expectations of those changes by which carnal men fancy that the blanks of this world's lottery may become prizes; all inclination to spend more than we can afford in things not absolutely necessary, or to appear above our rank in raiment, habitations, furniture, or table, and to incur debts by thus emulating our superiors; all that shame, which we are apt to feel at the discovery even of honest frugal poverty; all our reluctance to leave our children to earn their bread by menial labour, if God be pleased so to appoint it; and a great many other things which we witness around us, and may be conscious of in ourselves, are manifest deviations

* Matt. xvi. 24—26. xix. 29. Luke xviii. 25—30. 1 Cor. viii. 12. 13. x. 31. Heb. xiii. 5. 6.

† Matt vi. 31—34. Luke xii. 22—34.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 21—23. 29—31.

from the spirit of christianity, inconsistent with the principles of the gospel, and productive of very many evil consequences. It does not indeed follow that such persons, as manifest *a degree* of these carnal propensities, are *insincere* in their profession; but it proves that they have but partially understood the tendency, and experienced the efficacy, of the truth. And if any who contend for evangelical doctrines, are wholly strangers to this "crucifixion to the world," and treat such subjects as *low* and *legal;* without doubt their faith is dead and their hope presumptuous: for all true christians lament and mourn, that they are no more mortified to the world, and indifferent about its perishing trifles.

2. *Benevolence*, or *philanthropy*, is an eminent branch of the christian temper. The law of "loving "our neighbour as ourselves" is written in the heart of every regenerate person; and it is constantly referred to in the New Testament as the believer's rule of conduct towards all men. Our Lord has beautifully illustrated its extensive meaning, in the parable, or narrative, of the good Samaritan; and he exemplified it in his beneficent life, and by dying for us when we were strangers and enemies. Every man, of whatever nation, complexion, or religion he may be, is our *neighbour*, whom we are commanded to love as ourselves, and to whom we ought to behave as we would he should act towards us: and this is the substance of the second table of the law.* The truths of the gos-

* Essay iv.

pel also, respecting the worth of immortal souls, the ruined state of the whole human species, the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace, the infinite sufficiency of the redemption of Christ, the love of the Father in sending his Son to be the Saviour of the world, the love of the Son in dying for us, the love of the Spirit in quickening us when dead in sin, the possibility of the greatest persecutor being made partaker of the same grace; as well as the precepts of our Lord, who enforced the spiritual duties of the law on his disciples by evangelical motives; must influence every one who experiences their transforming energy, to love his neighbour unfeignedly, and to aspire after a more perfect conformity to the holy commandment and the attractive example, of his gracious Saviour. These principles tend to enlarge the heart in goodwill to men: to soften it into compassion; to subdue envy, enmity, and resentment; and to kindle an ardent desire after the present and future happiness of the human species, however distinguished and separated or whatever their character and conduct towards us may be. This general disposition to "love our neighbour "as ourselves," and to *regulate that love according to the rules of God's word*, comprehends all the various affections which belong to the several relations of life: for these, when rational and legitimate, are only modifications of benevolence, or emanations from it, in conformity to the providential will of God, and in obedience to his commandments.—In like manner the special love of our *brethren*, or fellow christians, results from the same general principle; for believers are related to each other more nearly than to any other

persons: they are children of the same Father, heirs of the same inheritance, yea, members of the same body, partakers of the same divine life, and temples of the same Spirit. They are fellow-soldiers in the same army, fellow travellers in the same journey, denizens of the heavenly city. They possess also an excellence peculiar to themselves, even the image of God and the beauty of holiness: they are brethren and representatives of Christ, to whom we are required to shew all kindness for his sake; and as if he were personally present with us: and on all accounts they are entitled, not only to our good-will and compassion, but to our cordial approbation, esteem, and most endeared affection.* Evangelical principles therefore must influence those who experience their energy, to delight in the society of true christians, and to choose them as companions.† This indeed is selected by the apostle, as the sure evidence that we "are passed from death unto life;"‡ for when we value and take pleasure in those who bear the image of Christ, profess his gospel, and walk in his ways; when we find our hearts united to them in love, and enlarged in desires of promoting their welfare, not because they belong to our party, but because they belong to Christ; when our cordial affection is increased in proportion as they appear to us to bear his holy image, even though they differ from us in some sentiments or forms: it then appears that "the truth dwells "in us" with transforming power, and that we really

* Gal. vi. 10. † Ps. xvi. 3. cxix. 63. ‡ 1 John iii. 14.

are the Lord himself. By nature we were disposed to dislike, shun, or neglect such persons, and even to despise and hate them; or if in other accounts we loved any of them, this affection might indeed make us *overlook their religious peculiarities*. But it would not induce us to take pleasure in their spiritual conversation and behaviour. This love of the brethren may easily be distinguished from an attachment to persons of our own party, who please us by coincidence of judgment, and flattering our good opinion of ourselves, which is only a specious modification of self-love. For when this is all, a man will prefer the less spiritual, even of his own sect, to those who are more so; and will choose to associate with mere carnal men, who agree with him in sentiment on disputed points, rather than with the most eminent believers who are of another opinion: and he will be always more ready to engage in controversy, than to hold the truth in peace and love.—From these two branches of the christian temper many others will result, and indeed they cannot be proved genuine except by their connexion with the rest.

3. A disposition to be "harmless and blameless" is the genuine effect of evangelical principles well understood and truly believed. Beyond dispute the world is full of misery; and this misery, in great measure, springs from the crimes of men, not only as a punishment inflicted by divine justice, but also as a necessary effect. Following the impulse of their appetites and passions, they render themselves and others wretched, and seduce one another into such courses as must, if

persisted in, end in future misery. The real christian therefore, from regard to the happiness of others and of himself, as well as from zeal for the glory of God, will carefully guard against every thing which tends to increase the sum total of human misery or vice; and his moderation respecting worldly things will place him out of the reach of many temptations to which others are exposed, or else enable him to resist them. He will habitually aim to be just and honest in all his dealings; not grasping at gains, which custom may have sanctioned, but which strict probity forbids; not taking advantage of any man's ignorance or necessity, to circumvent or exact from him; not evading *taxes*, and so leaving his neighbour to bear a disproportionate part of them; not insisting on his utmost due, when it would distress those who owe it; not keeping by a continual fraud, that property which has been unjustly obtained, when it is in his power to make restitution; not living extravagantly, or engaging in perilous schemes, and thus contracting needless debts to the injury of his creditors and family; not taking his neighbour's work without wages, or oppressing the poor to increase his wealth or support his luxury; not concurring in any plan for getting money, by methods which enslave the persons, expose the lives, or endanger the souls of men; nor using the too customary impositions of trade, which are every where condemned in scripture, however pleaded for by men professing to believe it, and who substitute the rule of doing as others *do* to us, instead of doing as *we would they should do* to us. In short, he will conscientiously render to God, to rulers and to all the

different members of the community, their dues; rather choosing to give up his own right, than to infringe upon that of another; and though he does not *in every instance* come up to that exactness which he proposes; yet his habitual attainments will accord with his knowledge of the divine word, and be proportioned to his experience of its transforming efficacy on his heart.

The same principles will influence the consistent believer to "put away lying, and to speak truth with "his neighbour;" paying the strictest regard to veracity, sincerity, and fidelity, in all his professions, conversations, narration of facts, and engagements. He cannot consistently trifle with so sacred a matter as truth, for the sake of a jest, a humorous tale, or a compliment; much less to gratify anger, malice, or avarice; or in flattery, slander, or religious controversy. He will aim to avoid all prevarication and equivocal expressions, and whatever has a tendency to deceive; his "yea, will be yea, and his nay, nay:" he will study undisguised sincerity, and not, under professions of friendship, raise expectations which he has no intention or prospect of answering: he will deem himself bound to punctuality and fidelity to all his engagements, even when they prove injurious to him; and will certainly fulfil them, if it be required and practicable, provided he was not deceived in the grounds on which he made them, and no command of God be violated by it.*

* Ps. xv. 4.

The same disposition of leading a blameless and harmless life will influence him to those kinds and to that degree of *self-denial*, which are requisite in order to avoid gratifying any inclination, by disturbing the peace, corrupting the morals, or injuring the person of another; or which may in any way tempt, weaken, or stumble those around him. It will equally caution him to bridle his tongue, and to abstain from all bitter, provoking, backbiting, or corrupting discourse: and from all words, however witty and ingenious, which tend to pollute the imagination, to inflame the passions, to asperse the reputation, or disturb the domestick harmony of others. Nay, consistency requires him to avoid every expression that may give needless uneasiness to another; and to refrain from repeating disadvantageous reports, though known to be true, except when it is necessary to prevent injury or deception.

In these and many other particulars, the believer's principles will influence him to "avoid all appearance of evil," when it can be done with a clear conscience: to take care that "his good be not evil spoken of;" to "provide things honest in the sight of all men;" and to give no needless offence. Thus he will endeavour by well-doing to put to silence false accusers, and to compel even those who hate his religion to allow, that he is a quiet *good kind of person*.—Alas! "in many things we offend all:" but the *consistent christian* will *excuse* none of his failures: on the contrary, when conscious of having acted improperly, he will condemn himself, even more severely than others condemn him.—Let it be here also noted, that diligence in the proper business of a man's station, without med-

dling with such things as do not belong to it, is an essential part of a *harmless* conduct: and the consistent christian will be very frugal and provident, and submit to many hardships rather than burthen others, or *needlessly* leave his family to be maintained by them. The example of Christ and his apostles, as well as the precepts of the New Testament, shew that every degree of sloth and bad management, by which men are reduced to a disgraceful poverty, and led to intercept what others have a prior claim to, is inconsistent with a christian's obligations and character, however zealous they may be for the doctrines and ordinances of religion: and surely, evangelical motives should induce us to fill up our proper stations as diligently, as worldly motives do the most respectable part of ungodly men.

4. To *love mercy, and to be kind and liberal in doing good*, is peculiarly the disposition and character of the true christian.—The apostle's language on this subject is very remarkable.—"See that ye abound in "this grace also:—ye know the grace of our Lord "Jesus Christ; that though he was rich, yet for your "sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty "might be rich."* "Charge them that are rich in "this world, that they do good, that they be rich "in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate."† But this topick, as far as the affluent are concerned, will be more fully discussed in an-

* 2 Cor. viii. 7—9. † 1 Tim. vi. 17—19.

r place;* yet even they "who labour, working
ith their hands, are required to give to them that
:ed;" and the cup of cold water, or the widow's
mites, may express a willing mind, as decidedly
he largest beneficence of the wealthy. Active
lness, however, does not consist merely in *giving;*
a man may express much love by denying his
inclination or foregoing his ease, that he may
e others. That charity, of which the apostle
ks so highly,† is especially distinguished by its
igned desire and aim to promote both the tem-
l and eternal good of others; and may be shewn
vast variety of unexpensive services, and in mi-
self-denials, accompanied with alacrity and kind-
. The consistent christian, in the lowest condi-
, will never want an occasion of convincing his
circle, that he wishes to do them good, and is
tually ready to put himself to trouble and incon-
ence for that purpose; while he will always be able
ray for numbers to whom he can render no other
ice. And though "the household of faith" is en-
d to the preference in such works and labours of
; yet none, no not even our bitterest enemies and
secutors, are to be excluded from them.

. Christian principles will induce a man, whilst
s endeavouring to do good to all, and harm to
e, to *suffer long*, to forbear, to forgive, and to fol-
peace with all men. The patience and long suf-

Essay xxii. † 1 Cor. xiii.

fering of God, though continually provoked, his exuberant kindness, in plentifully supplying the wants and protecting the persons of the *wicked;** and especially his forbearance towards *us* when we were enemies to him, and the inexpressible grace by which we were made his friends; his mercy in beseeching sinners to be reconciled to him; his readiness to forgive the most numerous and aggravated rebellions, and to confer all blessings on every one who applies for them; his persevering love to believers, notwithstanding their subsequent ingratitude and misconduct; the example of Christ, "who when he was reviled, "reviled not again," but prayed for his murderers with his dying breath;† the constant tenour of the New Testament precepts; and the rebukes given to the disciples when they were actuated by a different spirit, combine to shew of what importance this disposition is, and undeniably prove that it is the certain effect of evangelical doctrines, well understood and truly believed.‡ If the professed christian loves those alone who are of his own sect or religion, "what does "he more than others?" or in what does the peculiar effect of his principles, and the grace given unto him appear? Indeed this disposition is essential to the very exercise of living faith; and our Lord has expressly declared, that "except we forgive men their tres- "passes, our heavenly Father will not forgive us."§

* Matt. v. 43—48. † Luke xxiii. 34. 1 Pet. ii. 20—24.

‡ Luke vi. 27—36. ix. 51—56. Rom. xii. 14. 19—21. 1 Pet. iii. 8, 9.

§ Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15.

He has taught us to ask forgiveness of God, "as we "forgive them that trespass against us:" so that the prayer of a revengeful man for pardon, yea, of every one who does not "from his heart forgive his brother "his trespasses," is in fact an imprecation of divine vengeance on himself. Our Lord has illustrated the subject by a most affecting parable:* and he requires us to forgive our brethren, not only "till seven times, "but till seventy times seven:" yea, seven times a day, if the offender need it and ask for it.† We are repeatedly exhorted to "put on as the elect of God, "(holy and beloved,) bowels of mercy, kindness, "humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; for- "bearing one another and forgiving one another, if "any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ "forgave us."‡

Nor should this be confined to our christian brethren: it must be extended even to our most furious persecutors, notwithstanding all their curses and cruelties; for "even hereunto were we called." We are not, indeed, required to *place any confidence* in such men, or to *confer special favours* upon them; (for the Lord restricts his special favours to his chosen people:) much less ought we to love the crimes and society, or to countenance the heresy, infidelity, idolatry, or superstition of the wicked; but we may express our decided abhorrence of their vices and errors, and oppose them with the utmost firmness; and yet relieve their urgent wants, assist them in perils

* Matt. xviii. 21—35. † Luke xvii. 3. 4.
‡ Eph. iv. 1, 2. 31, 32. v. 1, 2. Col. iii. 12, 13.

and distresses, seek their best welfare, forgive their injuries, pour out our prayers for their conversion, answer their revilings and imprecations with mild language and good wishes, and persevere in endeavouring to "overcome evil with good."

We may lose the thoughts of a man's ill usage of us; in considering the misery which he is bringing on himself: and we may, from a sense of duty, take a decided part against him, as far as his conduct disturbs the peace of society, or tends to corrupt the purity of the church, even while resentment has yielded to compassion in our hearts, and our secret prayers form an authentick evidence of our love to his soul. Thus the judge or prosecutor may pity, and express good will to, the criminal in whose condemnation his duty requires him to concur. Thus a man may forgive, and shew all proper lenity to, the fraudulent debtor or assailant, while his obligations to his own creditors and family compel him to seek legal redress for important injuries, or to ward off such as are threatened. And thus the zealous servant of Christ may write or preach against anti-christian or infidel principles, in the most energetick manner, (provided he do not violate the rules of truth and meekness,) and yet be ready to relieve the urgent wants, and to pity the miseries, of those who hold them: so that they who object to such conduct, certainly "know not what spirit they are "of;" but vainly suppose those censures to spring from warmer zeal, which are the effect of a haughty, bitter, violent, and vindictive disposition.

The apostle James emphatically says, "Who is a "wise man, and endued with knowledge among you?

"Let him shew out of a good conversation his works "with meekness of wisdom;" and adds, "But if "ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, "glory not and lie not *against the truth*," (as if the doctrine of Christ were to be blamed for such misconduct:) "this wisdom descendeth not from above, "but is earthly, sensual, devilish: for where envying "and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. "But the wisdom that is from above," (the gift of God in answer to the prayer of faith, and the genuine effect of christian principles,) "is first pure, then "peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy "and good fruits, without partiality and without hy-"pocrisy: and the fruit of righteousness is sown in "peace of them that make peace." "For the wrath "of man worketh not the "righteousness of God."*

In all cases where boasting, reviling, slander, contest for victory, rash judging, misrepresentation, and a disposition to expose an opponent to ridicule, contempt, or enmity, are admitted; where anathemas, or personal reflections foreign to the subject in hand, are vented; or a desire of punishing men for their religious opinions, or of withholding from them the common offices of humanity, is intimated; there the spirit of christianity ceases, and the same principles operate, which kindled all the fires of pagan or papal persecution: and whatever be the tenets or pretexts of persons who indulge such tempers towards their own enemies, or those of their religion; they are (perhaps unawares) imitating and sanctioning the very evils which excite their vehement indignation. It is in vain

* Jam. i. 5, 19, 20. iii. 13—18.

for men to say that they forgive and do good to their *own enemies*, and only object to kindness shewn to the *enemies of Christ:* for how can the bitter persecutors of christians be any other than the enemies of Christ? And did not all those professed christians, who anathematized, imprisoned, enslaved, starved, burned, or massacred hereticks, as they called them, by tens of thousands, pretend that they were actuated by zeal for the honour of Christ, and against his enemies? It is to no purpose to adduce a few passages from Scripture to sanction such a spirit and conduct; an inspired writer might properly denounce vengeance on the inveterate enemies of God, and utter prophecies respecting them; but such exempt cases do not constitute our *rule of conduct*, for that must be regulated by the express precepts, and by the example of Christ, *as he was obedient to the law for us:* nor may we follow even a prophet or apostle further than he followed the Lord.

Christian principles, therefore, will teach a man as far as he is influenced by them, to recede from his right for the sake of peace and love, in all things that consist with our duties; and to "follow peace with all "men," so as "to pursue after it" even when it flees from him. The consistent believer will especially aim to promote the peace of the church, and avoid whatever may disturb it. He will, "if possible, live peaceably with all men," and only deviate from this conduct when compelled to it by duty. He is also a peacemaker, as far as he has influence, both among his brethren and neighbours. He desires to be of one mind and judgment with all who love the Lord; and if he must differ from them in sentiment, he would

differ amicably, and reluctantly; for he "endeavours "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He would "do all things without murmurings and "disputings," and nothing "through strife and vain "glory:" knowing that "the servant of the Lord "must not strive, but be gentle towards all men; in "meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." He is aware that God alone can, "give men repent-"ance to the acknowledgment of the truth;" and that revilings and bitter sarcasms are none of the means which he has instituted, and on which a blessing may be expected. His self-knowledge and experience forbid him to disdain or despair of others; and so long as he deems it right to address himself to them at all, he will do it with a hope and a prayer, that they may yet be saved by the abounding grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same principles influence the believer to cultivate an habitual forbearance, and a readiness to pass over and forgive the manifold little faults, mistakes, and petulances, which we must expect to meet with, even in the best of men whilst they continue in this imperfect state: for he knows that he needs such reciprocal forbearance from them; and without this mantle of love covering the multitude of faults, no peace can be expected in human society. He has been taught to bear without much concern those affronts, which proud men deem it a point of honour to resent, whatever consequences ensue: and if he be ridiculed or reviled for his tameness, he remembers the meekness of Christ amidst the scorn and cruelty of his enemies. His *point of honour* is, not to suffer himself to be

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Cor. xiii.

overcome by any kind or degree of evil; but to "overcome evil with good," and to subdue his own spirit: and his fortitude is shewn, by facing dangers and enduring hardships, in the cause and after the example of Christ. But when he is conscious of having injured or affronted others; he readily submits to the most humiliating concessions or reparation for the sake of peace. His principles also teach him, to avoid all irritating expressions, and to stifle every rising of resentment for injuries received; to fear *harbouring a prejudice or grudge* against any man, (for "anger "resteth" only "in the bosom of a fool;") to watch for opportunity of convincing an obstinate enemy, that he bears him no ill-will, but would gladly live amicably with him; and to forget, as far as he can, the hard treatment that he has met with, not liking to mention it, or hear others expatiate on it; and only recollecting it in order to pray for the injurious party. But on the other hand, the same views will lead him to remember and to mention, when proper, the kindness shewn him; for they tend to cherish gratitude, not only to the Giver, but also to the instruments, of all our comforts.

I might enlarge on the candour in judging of men's motives, and of those actions that may admit of a more or less favourable construction, and the courteousness, affability, and affectionate behaviour which christian principles proportionably effect; but I must not at present proceed any further. The apostle's description of that charity or *love*, which is even greater than *faith* and *hope*, includes all that hath been advanced, and much more than I am able to express. As a

natural philosopher would define gold by its peculiar properties, which exist as really in a grain as in a talent; so he shews the nature of love itself, without regard to the quantity possessed by any individual. "Charity "suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not, "charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not "behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own" (interest, credit, ease, or indulgence,) "is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, "but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, "believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all "things;—Charity never faileth."* As far then as christian principles prevail, peace, harmony, and comfort abound: and were their influence universal, they would rectify the whole moral state of the world. What then shall we think of those who spend their lives in running them down, or representing them as of licentious tendency? What shall we say concerning those who take occasion from the gospel to indulge their selfish, sensual, or malignant passions? Or to what shall we ascribe the improper conduct even of true christians, but to their want of a fuller acquaintance with the tendency of their principles, and a more complete experience of their efficacy?

* 1 Cor. xiii.

ESSAY XX.

On the Believer's Attention to relative Duties.

THOSE dispositions which a real belief of evangelical truth never fails to produce, will be especially manifested by a conscientious attention to the duties of the several relations which constitute human society, according to the precepts and exhortations of the holy Scriptures. By this indeed the excellency of our principles is peculiarly displayed, and true holiness distinguished from all counterfeits.

Our *natural* propensities are so diversified by constitution, education, habits, connexions, and pursuits, that they sometimes assume the appearance of things spiritually good: for instance, a courageous temper may be mistaken for christian firmness and fortitude; and an indolent or yielding turn of mind may pass for christian meekness, pliancy, and compassion. Yet the counterfeit is perfectly distinct from that holy temper which it apparently resembles; and has very little effect on the *general* conduct, though it may be very conspicuous in a few detached instances: at the same

time it unfits men for several parts of their duty, renders them peculiarly prone to sins which coincide with their natural propensity, and leaves them even in their best actions regardless of the will and glory of God, and of the true happiness of mankind. Indeed when the mind is in a measure influenced by divine grace, natural propensities may easily deceive us as to the degree of it: a harsh, rough, violent, or obstinate temper often induces an appearance of zeal and boldness in religion far beyond what is genuine: and on the other hand, prevent superficial observers from perceiving, how much right principles have humbled, softened, and meliorated the heart: and this may also create the believer himself a great deal of trouble and uneasiness, perhaps to the end of his days. In like manner, a timid, placid, indolent disposition gives a man an appearance of great meekness and gentleness, even when he is but little influenced by right principles: whilst the greatest prevalence of grace in his heart, will leave him too yielding, too apt to make improper compliances, and to decline hardships, dangers, difficulties, and contests, even on the most important occasions.

But when the christian is followed into the retired scenes of life, the habitual effect of his principles may be more precisely ascertained; and his attention to the welfare, comfort, and peace of all around him, even at the expence of many personal inconveniences and much self-denial, will prove his piety to be genuine and of the most salutary tendency. This will, therefore, constitute the subject of the present Essay, and of that which follows: but it may be useful to premise a few observations.

1. When we state the *believer's relative duties*, we do not mean that other men are exempted from the same obligations; but merely that christian principles, and the special grace by which they are planted and rendered effectual in the heart, incline and enable believers to attend to these duties in their habitual conduct; though they do not perform them in that extent and perfection in which they own them to be obligatory: whereas other persons either live without any rule, or lay down rules for themselves, which differ widely from the precepts of Scripture; or else they *allow themselves habitually to neglect their own duty*, in this as well as in other particulars.

2. The attention to relative duties, produced by evangelical principles, exceedingly differs even from that which results merely from regard to the authority of God as a Law-giver. In this case, the fear of punishment and the hope of reward, are the only influential motives of a religious nature; and these indeed aided by self-love in its manifold operations, and by natural affection, may, in particular circumstances produce a very decent outward conduct: but believers, besides all these motives are influenced by the constraining love of Christ, a sense of immense obligations received, a desire of adorning and recommending the gospel, and unfeigned love to all around them, producing a permanent attention to every thing connected with their *present* and *eternal* welfare.—We therefore find, that the apostles always inculcated relative duties from these and similar considerations: and thus affixed an evangelical stamp to their practi-

cal instructions, as well as a practical stamp to their doctrinal discussions.

3. The believer indeed endeavours "to shew his 'faith by his works," but he also *judges his works* by the strict rule of the spiritual requirements of the law: so that, whilst he hopes for a *gracious* reward from his reconciled God, according to the new covenant in the blood of Christ; he is conscious that his best performance even of relative duties, is so defective as to deserve punishment, if the Lord should be extreme to mark what is done amiss. He therefore, habitually connects the exercise of repentance and faith with all his obedience; even when nothing occurs to excite a doubt in his mind concerning his acceptance with God.

4. The sacred writers generally begin with the duties of the inferior relations: whether it be, that these are commonly the most difficult to our self-willed ungovernable nature; or that a greater number of believers occupy these stations; or that the advantageous performance of the duties belonging to the superior relations depends very much on the conduct of inferiors. But, however this may be, we must carefully observe that, in most instances, the failure of one party in *reciprocal relations*, does not excuse the neglect of duty in the other; though it commonly increases the difficulty, and renders it a more severe trial of faith and obedience. In this the excellency of scriptural principles especially appears: if we behave well in relative life only to them who behave well to us,

what do we more than others? This is merely doing as we are done by, not as we *would be* done by. These observations having been premised, we proceed to consider—

1. The *reciprocal duties of husbands and wives*, from which relation most others are regularly derived. The Creator himself instituted the conjugal union before the entrance of sin, for the most wise, kind, and important purposes, with which his whole plan respecting the human race was inseparably connected. He saw that "it was not good for Adam," even in paradise, "to be alone," and that "there was no "help meet for him" to be found among all the other creatures; no one suited to engage his affections, to participate his enjoyments, to be constituted his companion, or to unite with him in the worship of God. He was, therefore, pleased to form the woman from his side, as "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh;" to lay the foundation of a moderate subordination and most rational affection: and he gave her to Adam, to be his associate and counterpart, and to unite with him in training up their common offspring; that she might yield him the willing obedience of cordial esteem and affection, and receive from him the attention, protection, and counsel, of wisdom, love, and mild authority. God made no more than one woman for Adam;* for the remote desire of polygamy could never have entered man's heart, had he not become a sinner. He joined Adam and Eve together, blessed them, and pronounced the union indissoluble by human authority, (as no cause of divorce could have

* Mal. ii. 15.

isted in holy creatures) and he added, " for this use a man shall leave his father and mother, and all cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one sh." To this original institution our Lord re- dly referred in his decisions on the subject; con- ly inserting the word *twain, in addition* to the s used by the sacred historian, lest any corrupt pretation should be superinduced.

ad not sin entered, this union would doubtless subsisted, during the whole term of probation ed to Adam and Eve, and to the rest of their pos- ; till they were admitted to that more exalted , which was promised as the reward of entire ience: and that unalterable fidelity, attachment, affection which, with their inseparable effects, have resulted from the perfection of human na- are still required by the spiritual law of God, as s circumstances continue to be the same. But and great changes have taken place in conse- ce of the fall. " Sin hath entered into the world, d death by sin." The Lord himself often dis- s the marriage-union, soon after it hath been ed; and, at whatever time this separation takes , his word leaves the surviving party entirely at ty to form another union, if that be deemed ex- nt. Unfaithfulness to the marriage covenant in r party makes way for the dissolution of the n, as by a moral *death;* and where it is clearly ed without any suspicion of collusion, a divorce *t to be easily and certainly attainable.* Various mstances in the present degraded state of human e, by weakening the authority of reason, and

giving force to the passions, add to the original ends for which marriage was instituted. The manifold mistakes, imperfections, and faults, to which all are liable, render mutual forbearance, forgiveness, and self-denying concessions, essential to connubial harmony and comfort; whilst the malignity, sensuality, and obduracy, of which fallen man is capable, induced the Lord himself to *permit* divorces and polygamy among the Jews, to prevent more dreadful consequences; but as the christian dispensation contains no *municipal* law, it could not consistently make any such allowances. Besides, the manifold sorrows, pains, trials, and temptations, to which our race is now exposed, and the peculiar sufferings incident to the *female* sex, have given rise to a variety of duties which would not otherwise have been incumbent: so that the relative obligations of this union vary exceedingly from what they would have been, had not sin entered; and are become more difficult to be performed.

Several questions, often agitated on this subject, do not indeed properly fall within the design of these Essays; but we observe in general, that some *legal and authenticated recognition* is absolutely necessary, to distinguish this honourable union from all temporary and disgraceful connexions: for, the opinion that the consent of the parties *alone* is essential to marriage, to which the outward ceremony can give no additional validity, is suited to answer the purpose of libertines; and tends to multiply seductions, and to disseminate licentiousness. Should it be granted, that this or the other *form of solemnizing* matrimony is not in itself of divine authority; it must also be main-

tained that *some warranted form* is indispensably necessary: and it will thence follow, that the form appointed by the laws of our country is sanctioned by the Lord also; unless it can be proved that he hath excluded legislators from making such appointments, by prescribing the requisite form in his holy word; or that the form fixed upon by them is in itself a violation of the divine law.

It has been observed that divorces should not be admitted except for fornication, being expressly prohibited in all other cases: but marriages contracted between those near relations, whom the Lord for the wisest reasons hath prohibited to intermarry, are in themselves justly deemed invalid, and may properly be dissolved. In all cases, however, "those whom "God hath joined together, man ought not," on any pretence whatever, "to put asunder:" and the fewer restrictions to marriage are added to those expressly made by divine authority, the better will the true interests of mankind, in every order of society, be provided for. That polygamy also is expressly prohibited by the sacred Scriptures, must appear to every unbiassed mind, who carefully compares together the passages referred to.* The intermarriage of the professed worshippers of God with idolaters and other open despisers of him; and that of believers with those who are evidently strangers to true godliness, are prohibited at least in all ordinary cases; and the

* Gen. ii. 24. Mal. ii. 14—16. Matt. xix. 3—9. Mark x. 11, 12. 1 Cor. vii. 2—4.

infringement of these prohibitions has in all ages been extremely injurious to the cause of religion.*

This may lead us back to our more immediate subject; for, the duty of christians in respect of this relation commences before they actually enter into it. When they deem it most conducive to their best interests and to their usefulness, to marry; their principles will lead them to "acknowledge God" in so important a concern, to consult his word, to pray for his direction and blessing, and to regard his providential dispensations in their determination. They cannot consistently treat this momentous matter with a childish levity, or hearken to the corrupt suggestions of worldly convenience, avarice, or irrational attachment; or to the fascinations of wit, beauty, or accomplishments of any kind, in preference to piety. A suitable companion through life, who may especially be helpful in forwarding spiritual improvement, and concur in every pious plan of family-religion, and the good education of children, should before all things be sought for: though a subordinate regard to situation in life, habits, prospects, and natural disposition may very properly be admitted. In short, the Lord, who knoweth all things, should be constantly and earnestly intreated to direct the choice and determination, and to give the blessing; in order to which, the advice of pious and prudent persons, and the judgment of affectionate parents and relations, should be attended to, as far as the word of God consists with their conclusions.

* 1 Cor. vii. 39. 2 Cor. vi. 14—16.

When the union has taken place, the married persons should consider each other, not only as the objects of their own choice, but also of the Lord's choice for them; and should constantly desire and pray to be perfectly satisfied with it. From that moment, the eye, the ear, the imagination, the heart, must be carefully closed against all other persons; and every word and action cautiously shunned, which may excite an uneasy thought in each other's mind, or which may give the least reason to suspect an abatement or change of affection. They should remember from the first, that they are both sinners, and must expect to be sufferers; that they are absolutely insufficient to each other's happiness; and that whilst God may render them instrumental to each other's comfort and welfare, they must expect to be also in many respects, sources of anxiety and sorrow to one another, and at last to be separated by the stroke of death. That idolatrous, selfish, and carnal love, therefore, to which nature leads, should be steadily counteracted; and grace should be sought, by constant prayer, to change it gradually for a more rational, subordinate, and spiritual affection: otherwise it will at length either abate, be turned into disgust, transferred to another object, or prove the source of the keenest anguish. The mind should also be prepared by every consideration, for continual and abounding forbearance, sympathy, mutual concession, and self-denial; without which the most promising prospects of connubial happiness will soon be covered with dark clouds: and it should never be forgotten, that there is much amiss in every human character, and much alloy in all earthly com-

forts; for too high expectations are the bane of satisfaction in almost every situation.

When both parties are real christians, their reciprocal duties are comparatively easy and pleasant; yet, even in these most desirable circumstances, the preceding cautions will not be found unnecessary. The general rules of conduct, for the wife and for the husband, are laid down by the apostle, with reference to the union between Christ and his espoused church, from whom all other motives must be deduced, and who in one way or other is our perfect example in every thing.* This allusion instructs the "wife to "submit herself to her own husband, as unto the "Lord," for his sake, and as the church is subject to him the Preserver and Saviour of the whole body. The Lord has placed the husband to be the head of authority, protection, and counsel to the wife; and she ought "to be subject to him in all things;" that is, provided nothing be commanded contrary to the will of God. The example of the true church shews, that the wife should render obedience willingly, from love and gratitude, with alacrity, and a steady desire of promoting the advantage, credit, and comfort of her husband; even when this is connected with such things as cross her own inclinations, and seem to be contrary to her own interest in matters of inferior moment. It teaches her to honour and reverence her husband, and to be very reluctant to discover his infirmities, or induce his frown; to consider herself as no longer her own to be at her own disposal, but as

* Eph. v. 22—33.

her husband's; to make it the business of her life, in subserviency to the glory and will of God, to promote his happiness, and especially to sooth him when discomposed by the various troubles of life; to accommodate herself to his station; to avoid every expence that may involve him; to concur in every prudent regulation as to his temporal concerns; and above all to assist him with her prayers and endeavours in every part of personal and family-religion.

On the other hand, the husband may learn from the same condescending pattern, "to love his wife as his "own body," notwithstanding her defects and misconduct: to treat her with the most persevering kindness and affectionate sympathy: to endure hardship and meet danger, in order to protect and provide for her; to employ his authority wholly for her good, and especially in promoting her sanctification and salvation; to admit her to a full participation of all the advantages attached to his station in life; to sooth all her sorrows with a tender attention, and a self-denying endeavour to alleviate them; not to despise her because of infirmities, and not to allow others to despise or injure her, "but to give honour to her as the wea-"ker vessel:" to be as careful not to give her needless pain or uneasiness, as he would be not to wound his own flesh; and to give up his own humour, nay, even sometimes his reasonable inclination, rather than ruffle her temper or give her umbrage, when by any means a temporary peevishness has been excited; and so to behave in all things, that she may find it easy to respect and esteem him. In general both of them are required to watch over each other, to tend each other

in sickness, to alleviate one another's cares and sorrows, to pray for and with one another, and to avoid whatever may hinder those prayers. Above all things each of them must remember, to be *most attentive* to their several duties when the other is most *deficient:* for if only one party at once indulge a wrong temper, or fall into misconduct, few serious interruptions of domestick harmony will follow.

To these *general* hints, a few more may be added of a particular nature. Sometimes it is discovered after marriage, that a mistake has been made as to the *religious* character of the person with whom the union has been formed. In this trying case, great care must be taken, that the mind be not alienated, or amicable intercourse interrupted, on that account; and that no disgust be excited by reproach, or any expression importing repentance of the union. On the other hand, seeking wisdom and grace from the Lord, without delay, by fervent and persevering prayer, the person thus situated, should constantly endeavour to bear the cross cheerfully: to win upon the other by kindness and attention, to induce a concurrence in family-worship, and attendance on the means of grace; and to use a prudent caution that the circumstance may be only an affliction, and not a snare, to the soul.

By whatever means a pious person is thus united with an unbeliever, the same cautions are in a measure needful, and others may be added. The apostle has expressly directed that believers should not on any such account withdraw from their partners, but should abide with them in hopes of being instrumen-

tal to their salvation.* In this case the wife, whose husband "obeys not the word," should endeavour "to *win him without the word:*" not so much by frequent and earnest discourse on religious subjects, (which ought to be introduced very cautiously, modestly, and affectionately,) as by a "chaste conversa-"tion, coupled with fear," or an union of circumspect fidelity and respectful submission; and to render herself agreeable to him, not by the vain decorations of elegant and costly attire, but "by the ornament of a "meek and quiet spirit," and the exercise of all those holy tempers, the seat of which is in the heart, and which are "in the sight of God of great value." In such circumstances, it may be advisable to bear unkind usage or neglect with patience, or to wait for opportunities of mild expostulation, in humble prayer and persevering submission. Thus the cross may be lightened which a contrary conduct commonly increases; and the best method taken of "adorning the doctrine "of God our Saviour," and of giving an unbeliever an affecting proof, that the truths he rejects are most excellent in their nature and tendency. Many of the same rules may properly be adopted by the pious husband, whose wife dislikes his religion: but in the superior relation there is a propriety in more explicitly and frequently introducing religious conversation, requiring attendance on the means of grace and in concurrence in family-worship. In both cases such compliances, as cannot be conscientiously made, should

* 1 Cor. vii. 12—17.

be firmly but mildly refused; and in proportion to the degree in which a decided conduct is adopted where the will of God is concerned, an obliging and yielding disposition should be manifested where personal inclination only is at stake, or where the matter is rather expedient than obligatory.

But there is a case of still greater difficulty; viz. when a believer has knowingly married an ungodly person, after having been acquainted with the truth and will of God on this subject. In general such persons flatter themselves with the hope of being the instrument of good to the object of their choice, though the reverse is by far the more common effect. Yet this hope should not afterwards be abandoned: but deep humiliation, with earnest prayers to a merciful God, to pardon and overrule for the best what cannot now be disannulled, should be considered as above all things needful. To this the observance of the foregoing rules should be added; and the consideration of the sin by which the cross has been incurred, should constitute an additional motive to persevering patience, meekness, and kindness, even in return for harsh treatment: and in one way or other, the Lord will support, comfort and rescue such humble penitents, and make all to work together for good to their souls.

These hints indeed, are very inadequate to the full discussion of so copious and important a subject; but they may throw some light upon the path of those, who read them with prayer, and compare them with the sacred Scriptures, from an upright desire of knowing and doing the will of God, and "adorning the "doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things."

ESSAY XXI.

The subject continued.

HAVING very compendiously stated the conduct to which the principles of the gospel will influence the believer, in respect to marriage, and in the conjugal relation; we proceed,

II. To consider *the reciprocal duties of parents and children.* This subject indeed has been already in great measure discussed;* but a few hints must here be subjoined, beginning with the duty of children to their parents. The apostle exhorts "children to obey "their parents *in the Lord;*" in obedience to his will, for the honour of his gospel, from grateful love to the Lord Jesus, and in imitation of his example; as this also "is right" in itself, and required by the holy law of God. The general grounds and nature of this duty have been stated; it remains for us to consider it, as practised by a believer from evangelical motives. If a

* Essay iv.

young disciple have the blessing of pious parents; in honouring and obeying them he will commonly honour and obey the Lord; and gratitude for the spiritual benefits derived to him, by means of their instructions, example, and prayers, will be an additional incitement to a respectful, submission, and obliging deportment; to a steady concern for their comfort, ease, interest, and reputation; and to a self-denying, frugal, and diligent endeavour to ward off want and distress from their old age: as pious Joseph maintained his father and family, just as many years in his old age, as Jacob had maintained him in his youth. In this case it will be peculiarly proper to bear with their infirmities, and conceal them from others; to submit to inconveniences and restraints in compliance with their wishes, and in order to sooth their sorrows; to consult them in every undertaking as long as they live; to pay a deference to their opinion, even when it is in a measure unreasonable, if it do not interfere with other duties; and never to grieve them by a contrary behaviour, without a very satisfactory reason, and with the most evident reluctance.

On the other hand, it sometimes happens that pious children have parents, whom they cannot but consider as strangers to the power of godliness. In this case it must be the leading desire of their hearts to win them over to the doctrine and grace of Christ; but in order to accomplish this purpose, it is peculiarly needful to watch against a hasty zeal and a violent spirit. They should expect to be opposed in their religious pursuits; to be assailed by arguments and authority, and perhaps by reproaches and menaces; to

be restrained by various methods from attending divine ordinances; and to be allured into such companies and diversions as are inconsistent with their profession. They ought therefore to beg of God to give them the meekness of wisdom as well as a stedfast mind; that they may not refuse obedience in frivolous or doubtful matters, or in a harsh and disobliging manner; but only where evident duty requires it, and with calm and mild declarations of the grounds on which they proceed. Thus it will appear that a scriptural conscientiousness (and not caprice, self-will, or self-conceit,) compels them to act in this manner: and in proportion as this is done, redoubled diligence and self-denial should be used, to oblige their parents in all other things. In general, children are not required to preach to their parents: at least every word should be spoken with modesty, tenderness, and unassuming gentleness; and they should rather aim to induce them to hear sermons, to read books, or to converse with pious and prudent christians, than themselves to give instructions, or engage in arguments with them, except in very particular circumstances. For parents will seldom become docile scholars to their own children, especially if they teach in magisterial and reproving language. The most conclusive argument which they can use consists in an uniform conscientious conduct, in obliging attention, silent submission to undeserved rebukes, diligence in business, fidelity to every trust reposed in them, and a disinterested regard to the temporal advantage of the whole family. When a young person uniformly acts in this manner, he will have opportunities of speaking or writing a

few words with weight and propriety, which being joined with persevering prayer, may at length be crowned with the desired success; whilst a contrary conduct will close a parent's ear against the most conclusive arguments and most zealous discourse.

These brief hints concerning the duties of children may properly introduce those of parents, who are appointed both by reason and revelation to be the guardians of their offspring, in respect to their present and future welfare. Attention to the duties of this important relation, must indeed commence, not only from the time when they actually become parents; but many things should previously be arranged, with reference to the probability of this important event; *important*, because every human being, that is brought into existence, must be completely happy, or miserable to all eternity! From the very first, wise and conscientious parents will do nothing, for the sake of ease, indulgence, or any other selfish purpose, which may endanger the life, health, understanding, or morals of their children; as far as may be, they will *personally* attend to every thing relating to them; and be very careful not to entrust them to those whose care and attention are merely the result of interested motives. They will perceive the importance of enuring them early to action, application, and observation; and of storing their minds as they become capable of it, with information on every subject, which can conduce to render them useful members of the community. They will endeavour to accustom them to such things as are of beneficial tendency, to preserve them from habits of

indolence and self-indulgence, and to prevent their forming improper connexions. Many difficulties indeed must be encountered in adhering tosuch a plan of education, and the success will not always answer expectation; but more may frequently be done than many parents so much as attempt to do; and the general education of both sexes, at present, seems calculated for any purpose, rather than that of regulating the judgments, and improving the minds, of the rising generation; of preserving their principles and morals from contamination; and of qualifying them for filling up the stations in life for which they are designed.

The word of God directs parents to rule their children, *during their tender years*, by compulsion; and to repress their *self-will* and rebellious spirit by correction; that they may be early habituated to obedience and submission; which will be of the greatest advantage to them during their whole lives, both in secular and religious matters. And the more any man studies human nature, and repeats the actual experiment, the fuller will be his conviction, that all attempts to educate children without correction, and to treat them as rational and independent agents, before they are capable of using their reason or liberty, spring from forgetfulness of their innate depravity, and oppose the wisdom of man to that of God: and let modern manners evince with what success this has been attended.* Chastisement then should be inflicted at an early period, dispassionately, and in moderation;

* Prov. xiii. 24. xix. 18. xxii. 15. xxiii. 13, 14. xxix. 17. Heb. xii. 5—11.

yet sufficient to attain eventually the end proposed by it, namely, to establish the parent's authority over the tender mind of the child. It is therefore, improper in general to contest a trivial matter: for this must either give the correction the appearance of undue severity, or induce the parent to desist before the child has completely submitted.

The frequency, severity, and passion, with which children are often corrected, and the bad effects occasioned by these *abuses*, prejudice numbers against the *use* of any correction. But the folly of arguing from the *abuse* of any thing against the *use* of it is universally allowed: and if children were early taught, by a firm and prudent exercise of coercion, to know that a parent would be obeyed whenever he gave a *decided* commandment, it would not be necessary often to repeat correction, and much less severity, all circumstances considered, would be requisite in education than is generally used. For when children become rational creatures, that authority, which correction has established, may be maintained by arguments, reproofs, commendations, and expostulations: whereas, too many leave their indulged children without chastisement, till age and habit have confirmed them in stubborn self-will; and then, by an unseasonable severity, they complete their ruin. Exasperated by their ingratitude, they find fault with their very attempts to please; and, by harsh language and unkind treatment, drive them into bad company and destructive courses; to which case the apostle seems especially to refer, when he says; "Fathers provoke not

"your children to anger, *lest they be discouraged.*"* On the contrary, parents ought to use every method to render their children, as they grow up, easy and happy in their company, and confident of a favourable reception in every attempt to please them: for this tends exceedingly to keep them out of temptation, to improve their minds, and to render the parental authority of wisdom and love respectable and amiable in their eyes; and if they can allure their children to *choose* them for companions, counsellors, and friends, in all their undertakings, a most important point indeed will be carried.

It is also incumbent on parents, to bring up their children in such a manner, and (if they can do it consistently with other duties,) to make such a moderate provision for them, as may at all events enable them to live comfortably in society, without being a burden to themselves or others. The christian is not indeed allowed to seek great things for his family, or to be desirous of advancing them much above his own rank in life: yet he will judge it best, if the Lord will, that they should not be depressed very much below it, at least by his fault; for that condition, in which men have been brought up, is generally the safest for them.

But the principles of the gospel will especially influence those, who are actuated by them, to desire the blessing of salvation for their beloved offspring. This will induce them to commend them to God in fervent constant prayer, from the time that they receive

* Eph. vi. 4. Col. iii. 21.

their being, and to instil instruction into their minds as soon as they become capable of receiving it. They will early begin to store their memories with wholesome words; to lead their attention to the simpler parts of the holy Scriptures; to impress them with a sense of their relation to God and to an eternal state, (especially by means of a regular family worship;) to bring them under public and private instructions of faithful ministers, to watch for opportunities of speaking seriously to them, and of enquiring what they have learned; and to encourage them in proposing questions on religious subjects, by answering such as they can with propriety.* They will also endeavour to keep them from all places and companies, and to remove out of their way all books, pictures, or other things, by which their principles may be corrupted, their imaginations polluted, or their passions inflamed; even as they would lay poison out of their reach. They will more decidedly reprove vice or impiety, than any childish neglect or waywardness; and avoid all such discourse or behaviour in their presence, as might counteract the tendency of their instructions, or sanction the pride, avarice, sensuality, and love of grandeur; or the envy or malignity of their nature.

It is peculiarly incumbent on religious parents to convince their children, as they approach to maturity, not only that they act in all other things conscientiously; but also, that they are more attentive to their comfort and interest, and more ready to forgive their faults than irreligious parents would be; though they can-

* Exod. xii. 26—28. Deut. vi. 6—9. Psal. lxxviii. 6—8.

not tolerate their vices, or concur in exceptionable plans of advancing or enriching them; because the Scripture holds forth such alarming examples to warn men, not to gratify their children by dishonouring God or injuring their neighbours.* It behoves parents, however, to remember the time when they were young, and not to cross the inclinations of their children when grown up, without substantial reasons, lest they should throw snares in their way. They should rather endeavour to manifest a disposition to concur in every thing conducive to their satisfaction, if it can be done consistently; that by thus encouraging their confidence in them, they may have the salutary influence of experienced counsellors, when the direct exercise of authority would endanger opposition. In particular, they should aim, rather to guide, caution, and advise them, in respect to *marriage*, than to compel or restrain them in an absolute manner: remembering that peace of mind, a good conscience, domestick harmony, and a connexion favourable to piety, conduce more to happiness even in this world, than wealth or a confluence of all earthly distinctions. Many directions might be added, in respect to the conduct to be adopted by parents, when children appear to be under religious impressions: but the subject is too copious to be discussed in this place.

This is the most important perhaps of all relative duties, and the neglect of this is productive of the most fatal consequences: for, besides those parents, who in various ways are accessary to the murder of

* 1 Sam. ii. 22—36.

the souls of their own offspring; even they who seem to regard other parts of Scripture, often overlook the command, "to bring up their children in the nurture "and admonition of the Lord;"* and either by neglect leave their minds like an uncultivated field, or by their general example and harsh treatment, prejudice them against the gospel, or indiscreetly lead them into such distorted views of it as are of fatal tendency. Indeed the methods are innumerable by which parents fail in this important duty: and whilst numbers act as if they did not much care, whether their offspring were happy, or miserable hereafter; it is to be feared that few, if any, are free from blame in this momentous concern.

It may here be proper to add, that they who in any way undertake to bring up the children of others, are required in many respects to perform the duties of parents to them. On the other hand, such young persons owe a measure of that respect, gratitude, obedience, and affection to them, which have been described as due from children to their parents: and the case is not altered, even when elder brothers or sisters are the persons on whom this charge has devolved. In like manner, the other superior relations are entitled to a measure of filial deference and attention, and ought to perform many parts of the parental office to their junior relatives: especially if their parents are dead, or incapable of performing it, or are wholly inattentive to them, and they are capable of bringing them up without burdening strangers.

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* Eph. vi. 4.

III. The mutual duties of brothers and sisters should not here be wholly omitted. The love, supposed to subsist amongst such endeared relations, is the scriptural standard of that pure and fervent affection, which christians ought to bear one towards another: the former, therefore, should not be treated as an instinctive propensity, but regulated by precept as a christian duty.

The children of one family, when they live much together, cannot in the present state of human nature, fail to meet with many trivial affronts and injuries from each other, which will interrupt domestick harmony, unless great circumspection be used not to give offence even by rudeness and uncourteous familiarity; and a constant endeavour be made to oblige, and to render one another easy and comfortable, joined with persevering forbearance, forgiveness, and various concessions. For want of these attentions, perpetual bickerings and lasting animosities frequently supplant brotherly love; and they, who should be, through life, faithful and tender friends, are often more estranged than almost any other persons. Of such bad consequences are the competitions, envyings, and jealousies that take place in families! and so careful ought parents to be, not to lay a foundation for them by an injudicious *partiality*, and not to treat them as matters of little moment!*

They likewise who associate so much together, as young persons in this relation commonly do, must

* Gen. xxxvii. 3, 4.

have many opportunities of influencing each other's principles and conduct: these are frequently made a very bad use of; and false principles are often instilled, and encouragement given to various things contrary to their duty to God, their parents, or others, even where no gross immorality or impiety appears. But that love, which evangelical principles increase and direct, will not only be disinterested, conceding, self-denying, liberal, and peaceful; but also prudent, pious, and holy: and they who are influenced by it will aim, by seasonable caution, counsel, or expostulation enforced by kindness, and a consistent example, and accompanied by fervent prayer, to guard such dear relations from snares and dangers, to instil good principles, and to draw them to attend to the concerns of their souls. Nor will it be improper in this case to speak more plainly, and debate the matter more fully (especially with those who are younger than themselves) than is becoming towards parents or superior relations: and it is very common for the Lord to bless such endeavours, and thus to make them the foundation of the most permanent friendship. The duties of the other collateral relations, who live much together, are in great measure the same.

IV. The reciprocal duties *of servants and masters* are the last of those which belong to domestick life. The condition of servants differs widely at present from what it was when the New Testament was written: for then they were generally slaves, the property of their masters; whose service they could not leave, but who might dispose of them as they pleased, or

nish them with almost uncontrouled severity. This ıld never consist with the law of "loving our ıeighbours as ourselves;" though it pleased God to :rate and regulate it in the *judicial* law of Moses; as he polygamy and divorces: and the state of things, at first opening of the christian dispensation, render- it improper for the ministers of religion directly to ıck a system, which was inseparable from the foun- ion of every government then existing in the world. is difference, however, gives the greater energy he exhortations, which the sacred writers address servants professing the gospel; except, that they y now leave those places where they are ill used, or vhich they are restrained from attending on divine or- ances or hallowing the Lord's day. Yet this liberty ıuld be used with much caution: for every place has advantages, and every master, (as well as every ser- ıt,) his faults; and men often incur much detriment, l forfeit manifold advantages, through impatience ler a single inconvenience. Especially servants netimes purchase a trivial increase of wages at enormous price.

The believer, therefore, who is "called being a ser- vant," or who finds it necessary for him to enter on this kind of life, should remember that God has nstituted these different situations in society, for the ne reasons as he has allotted the several members the body their distinct offices, namely, for the com- n benefit of the whole: and that he has chosen ser- ude as the best situation for him, and requires his eserved submission to it. He should also consider place in which he lives as the post for the present

assigned him, which he must not relinquish without substantial reasons, nor without fervent prayer for direction; and if removing from it be determined on, he ought nevertheless to perform the duties of his place without remission whilst he continues in it. If he wants a situation, he should seek a suitable one from the Lord, in dependence on his providence and promises; and perfect that which affords the greatest advantages for religious improvement, though somewhat more laborious or less lucrative.—And here it may be proper to remind both servants and masters, that though there are many vain talkers and deceivers, yet there are also true christians: it is, therefore, the height of absurdity for believers to prefer the society of ungodly persons in any relation, because they have been disgusted and ill used by hypocrites. Men do not throw away bank-notes because they have been cheated by forged bills: and no disappointment should cause them to despair of finding the far more valuable treasure of a christian master, or servants unless any one should imagine himself to be the only true christian in the land!

If pious servants are favoured with a situation in a religious family, they should remember, that *equality in christian privileges* by no means implies *equality in domestick life:* instead therefore, of behaving with an unbecoming familiarity, or neglecting their masters' orders, as if they "despised them;" they should "count "them worthy of all honour, and rather do them ser- "vice, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers "of the benefit."* And as they are conscious of much

* 1 Tim. vi. 1—5.

erfection in themselves, they should also make wances for it in others. They should value the ilege of family-worship very highly, even though in all respects conducted exactly to their mind; so order all their business, that nothing may inter- with their constant attendance on it, or with the ılar observance of the Lord's day. Should pious ants find themselves placed in families, in which cannot but deem the profession of religion to be ncere, they ought not hastily to mention their ıion, or speak of it with harshness: on the con- y, they should aim by a good example to exhibit difference between the form and power of godli- s. Even when they live in families where ignorance ungodliness prevail; they ought not to speak freely heir master's faults, or assume the office of au- ritive teachers: for no man would like to have a or a reprover in the character of a servant.

The christian servant will especially aim to "adorn ıe doctrine of God our Saviour," by cheerful dience to every lawful command, diligence in all duties of his station, and faithfulness to the trust osed in him; remembering, that his maintainance wages are the price which he receives for his *time*, *strength*, and *skill*. Consistency will require him prefer the credit, advantage, or comfort, of his ster or the family to his own ease or indulgence, and manifest peculiar sympathy and tenderness to them times of sickness and affliction; to speak exact h on all occasions; not to *purloin*, or join with those o defraud his master in small matters; nor by any ans to connive in the least at such petty dishonesty, vever sanctioned by custom, or whatever contempt

and ill-will he may incur by his conscientiousness. It will dispose him to strict frugality, and to see that no waste be made; and also to consult his master's inclination in the manner of doing his work. If he be justly blamed, he will learn to bear it quietly, owning himself wrong and doing better another time: if he be blamed without cause, or rebuked with harshness, (not to speak of more outrageous treatment,) he will endeavour to recollect the scriptural rule of "not answering again;" the neglect of which is productive of innumerable evils, especially to servants themselves.* He will remember that the apostle says, "Servants "be subject to your masters with all fear; not only "to the good and gentle, but also to the froward:"† and though ill usage may excite his passions, he will not deliberately say, "I do well to be angry;" but will consider Him, who "when he was reviled, re-"viled not again, when he suffered he threatened not." For we all are called to copy his example, as well as to shew the reality and excellency of our religion, by doing well and suffering patiently; and, however such a servant may be neglected by an austere and injurious earthly master, yet he shall certainly receive a gracious recompence from the Lord.‡ Thus his principles will teach him not to be an "eye servant" and "a man pleaser," attentive to his business only in his master's presence: but in singleness of heart to do the will of God, and to refer every thing to the honour of the Lord Jesus, and the credit of his gospel; not so

* Tit. ii. 9, 10. † 1 Pet. ii. 18—25.
‡ Eph. vi. 5—8. Col. iii. 22—25.

much fearing man's displeasure, as disgracing the cause of evangelical religion by his misconduct.

Such an habitual behaviour, in a servant professing religion, will not only conduce to his own interest, credit, and comfort; but will procure attention to any serious remark which he may make, or commendation which he may give of a book or a preacher. It will discountenance vice and impiety; nay, perhaps it may dispose some to examine into the nature of that religion, which produces such excellent fruits: while violent and zealous disputes for doctrines, from one whose conduct is disobliging and impertinent, not to say slothful and dishonest, expose to contempt the very truths for which he contends. The same principles will also lead a man to follow after peace with his fellow-servants. He will not indeed silently see his master defrauded, or join with others in riot: but he will avoid a morose and invidious conduct; not reporting, or even protesting against trifles, but only against manifest evils; endeavouring by kindness, patience when ridiculed, and forgiveness when injured, to win their attention to calm discourse on religious subjects. He will also take care never to seek his own interest by countenancing children in misconduct to their parents or each other, though he will oblige them for their good. He will not treat the indigent relations or dependants of his master with galling neglect, or attend on them with grudging. If obliged to refuse obedience to an improper command, he will do it with mildness and respect. If his time be too much taken up on the Lord's day, he will endeavour the more diligently to redeem what remains; and if constrained

to leave his place, he will be careful how he needlessly lessens his master's character in his own vindication. —The same rules, with circumstantial alterations, suit the case of apprentices, labourers, and all who are employed by others, according to the degree and nature of the trust reposed in them.*

On the other hand, masters are also instructed in their duties, by directions and examples in the holy Scriptures. The christian's principles will influence him to consider true piety as an invaluable accession to the character of a servant, who suits him in other respects; and to seek the blessing with fervent prayer, and by making his place desirable to such persons. If he be thus favoured, he will endeavour to behave to his servant, as to a brother in the faith: he will make proper allowances for mistakes and defects; and value one who, on the whole is faithful, upright, diligent, and peaceable, though not without faults; knowing how much the comfort of his family and the best interests of his children depend on such domesticks. If he meet with bad servants, he will strive to repress his anger, to avoid reproaches, and to behave well to them till he can change them. If his servants suit him in other respects, but are strangers to religion, he will use all proper means of conciliating their minds to it. In general, such a master will not expect more work from his servants than they can well perform; nor deprive them of time for relaxation and retirement. He will deem it his duty to give them adequate wages, and to make their situation as comfortable as he can.

* Gen. xxiv.

He will provide them with things suitable to their station when in health, and be very tender to them in sickness; procuring them help in their work under slighter indispositions, and proper advice, if he can, in more acute diseases.* He will not think himself justified by custom, in turning away a *faithful* servant, by sending him to an hospital, because he cannot do his work, if it be in his power to prevent it; but will consider, that he who has the benefit of his skill and labour when well, ought to submit to trouble and expence for him, when sick. Nay, if he can afford it, he will copy the example of the Lord, in respect of the *aged;* as He does not forsake his servants in their old age, or when their strength faileth. "Remembering "that he also hath a master in heaven," he will consult the interests of his servants, and be a sincere and faithful friend to them, in whatever may tend to their comfortable settlement in life. He will not keep them at a disdainful distance, or answer them with harshness, even when they are mistaken or unreasonable; nor express discouraging suspicions of them, or descant on their faults to others.

The same principles will influence him, to consider the souls of his domesticks as entrusted to his care. He will, therefore, order his affairs so as may give them most leisure and opportunity for hallowing the Lord's day, and use his authority in enforcing such observance of it.† He will read the Scriptures to them, and join with them in family-prayer; and he will arrange his daily plans in subserviency to that grand concern, and avoid whatever may prejudice their minds

* Matt. viii. 5—9. † Gen. xviii. 19.

against it. He will watch over their morals and principles, and exclude from among them infectious companions as much as possible. Thus he will make family-religion the cement of family peace; and not only aim to influence his servants by love to willing obedience, but to give them cause to bless the day when they entered his doors, both in this world and for ever.*

Many other relative duties might be discussed; but this topick has already occupied a full proportion of the limits prescribed to these Essays.—Subjects are required to obey the lawful commands of magistrates, to *respect* their persons, and revere their authority as God's ordinance; not to speak evil of *them: to* pay them tribute conscientiously; to pray for them; and to study to be quiet and mind the duties of their station.† —The duty of rulers and magistrates, as far as it falls under our plan, will be mentioned in an Essay on the improvement of talents.‡ The poor should behave with respect to the rich, without envying, coveting, or repining. The rich should be courteous, condescending, compassionate, and liberal to the poor; and set them an edifying example of piety.—The young should behave with modesty, deference, and attention to the old, especially to such as are godly, however poor they may be. The aged should temper gravity and seriousness with cheerfulness and kindness, in their conduct to the young.—The faithful pastor will

* Acts x. 7, 22. Eph. vi. 9. Col. iv. 1.

† *See Impartial Statement of Scripture Doctrine, in respect of Civil Government and the Duties of Subjects*, by the Author. Vol. 3. *of this Collection.* ‡ Essay xxii.

the Scriptures, his duty to his flock; and
.tent christian, will, even in this relaxed day,
himself as bound to honour, love, and attend
.aithful pastor.—In a word, true christianity will
.nce every man to fill up his station, in the family,
.he church, and in the community, to the glory of
.od, and the common benefit of the whole: and all that comes short of this, is the effect of remaining contrariety to its heavenly principles, in the judgment and dispositions of true christians, and among those "who name the name of Christ, but depart not from "iniquity."

ESSAY XXII.

On the Christian's improvement of his Talents.

WHEN the humble penitent has obtained peace of conscience by faith in Christ, and enjoys a prevailing hope of eternal life; he will be disposed, in proportion as his views are distinct and consistent to enquire seriously, by what means he may most effectually glorify the God of his salvation, and do the greatest good to mankind, during the remainder of his days. For, "the love of Christ" in dying on the cross to deliver sinners from the wrath to come, and to purchase for them everlasting felicity; and in calling him to partake of so inestimable a blessing, "will constrain him— "to live no longer to himself, but to Him who died "for him and rose again." This will induce him to consider very attentively, what advantages or opportunities his situation affords, of promoting the honour of the Redeemer's name; the peace, purity, and enlargement of his kingdom; the comfort and edification of his people; and the welfare, temporal and eternal, sion may be ascertained, and the degree of his grace

of the human species. These opportunities and advantages are commonly called *talents*, from the parable which our Lord spoke on this subject;* and doubtless this portion of Scripture, and that coincident with it,† relate entirely to the subject under consideration, and cannot reasonably be thought to point out the method of salvation, as if the improvement of *natural powers or common grace could merit or procure special grace*, as some have confusedly argued. For, indeed, *special grace* produces the *inclination and disposition to use natural powers and all other advantages, aright.*

There are various endowments and opportunities, which may be improved to the best of purposes; but which wicked men employ in gratifying their base lusts, to the increase of their own guilt, and the injury of all around them; and which formal professors of religion, who harbour hard thoughts of God and a secret dislike to his service, bury, as it were, in the earth. Of these the true disciple of Christ will avail himself; and by occupying with the talent entrusted to him, he will become as "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth."‡ Every one has some measure of these advantages afforded him, according to the appointment of infinite wisdom, which also assigns to each person his station in the church and in the community: and if a man profess the gospel, the use he makes of these advantages is one of the most decisive tests, by which the sincerity of that profes-

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* Matt. xxv. 14—30. † Luke xix. 11—27.

‡ Matt. v. 13—16.

estimated.* But the improvement, and not the number of his talents, will be considered in the decision: "he that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also "in much:"† and whilst the servant, to whom many talents have been entrusted, may be more extensively useful, he that hath improved a very small proportion will be equally favoured by his Lord. The poor widow's two mites may be more evidential of sincere love and fervent zeal, than the liberal donations of the affluent.

Every thing almost, which we are, or possess, or meet with, may be considered as *a talent:* for a good or a bad use may be made of all natural endowments or providential appointments; or they may remain unoccupied through inactivity and selfishness.—Time, health, vigour of body, and the power of exertion, and ability to endure fatigue; the natural and acquired abilities of the mind, skill in any lawful art or science, and the capacity for close mental application: the gift of speech, and that of speaking with fluency and propriety, and in a convincing, attractive, or persuasive manner; wealth, influence, or authority; a man's situation in the church, in the community, or in relative life: and the various occurrences, which make way for him to attempt any thing of a beneficial tendency: these, and many others that can scarcely be enumerated, are talents which the consistent christian will improve to the glory of God and the benefit of mankind. Nay, his improvement procures an increase of *talents*, and

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* Matt. xxv. 7, 8. James ii. 24—26. 1 John iii. 17—20.
† Luke xvi. 9—12.

gives a man an accession of influence, and an accumulating power of doing good: because it tends to establish his reputation for prudence, piety, integrity, sincerity, and disinterested benevolence; it gradually forms him to an habitual readiness to engage in beneficent designs, and to conduct them in a gentle, unobtrusive, and unassuming manner; it disposes others to regard him with increasing confidence and affection, and to approach him with satisfaction; and it procures for him the countenance of many persons, whose assistance he can employ in accomplishing his own salutary purposes. For, as far as we are consistent in our views of our calling and business in the world, we shall, both in the concerns of our own salvation, and in endeavouring to be useful, imitate the skilful mariner; who always keeps his port in mind, and gets forward in his voyage, by making use of every wind, and availing himself to the utmost, of every circumstance that arises from currents and tides, to accomplish his purpose. We shall, however, obtain a more distinct view of the subject, by selecting a specimen of these talents, and the improvement of which they are capable.

I. *Power and authority* constitute a most important trust, committed by the Great Ruler of the Universe to some of the human race for the benefit of the whole, and of every individual as far as consistent with it. The Scripture represents all power as originally derived from God; and all rulers as the ministers of his providence in governing the world, who must render an account to Him, both of the manner in which they ac-

gained dominion, and the way in which they governed. Waiving, therefore, all questions on these subjects, it suffices to say, that too many, who *in any way* have exercised authority over their brethren, have made a very bad use of it. Ambition, vain-glory, lust of dominion, rapacity, caprice, envy, furious anger, or divine revenge, superstition, or impiety, have often influenced them to employ the power intrusted to them, in exciting and waging bloody wars, destructive to their subjects, as well as to foreigners; in oppressing and burdening the poor, in favouring the exactions and oppressions which they ought to have crushed; in protecting and advancing the men whom they should have punished; *in harassing* those whom it was their duty to have *protected;* or in persecuting their peaceable subjects for their religious opinions; and thus augmenting, by various ways, the miseries which they were exalted on *purpose to remedy.*—There have also been some who, *as princes* or magistrates, have upon the whole behaved *negatively* well: they have not waged unnecessary wars, or molested their subjects by oppressions or persecutions; but have been peaceably contented with the splendour, dignity, and pleasures of their station, and have left it to their servants to keep the machine of government in motion. These have indeed done far less mischief than some others; but they have not done the good incumbent on them, nor prevented the evil which has been done, perhaps under the sanction of their names, and which they ought strenuously to have opposed; so that they may justly be said to "have buried their talent in the earth." Other rulers and magistrates, from natural

principles, have made, in some measure, a salutary use of their authority. They have enacted good laws, and administered justice with a considerable degree of impartiality; they have taken care to preserve their country from foreign enemies; and yet have avoided war as far as they consistently could, from a wise preference of the blessings of peace above the advantages arising from the most splendid victories. They have relieved the people from burdensome taxes, and defended the poor from oppressions, and the pious from persecutions; and, by thus providing for the temporal welfare of the state, they have obtained the endearing title of 'Fathers to their people.' The real Christian, when placed in authority, will carefully imitate this conduct from higher motives: and he will unite with it an uniform endeavour to render his whole administration subservient to the interests of true religion; and this constitutes the proper improvement of his talents.

But not only "the king as supreme," is intrusted with this talent: for all his counsellors and ministers of state, the members of the legislature, and the magistrates from the highest to the lowest, have a degree of power and authority vested in them by the great Ruler and Judge of the world, and to him they must be accountable for the use which they make of it. As they are placed in a conspicuous situation, multitudes scrutinize their conduct, either to censure or to imitate it; and consequently their example becomes proportionably more important. This will be an additional motive to the true Christian, to walk circumspectly and accurately; to show himself a pattern of a reverential

regard to the name, the day, the word, the house, and the ordinances of God; of sobriety, temperance, moderation, and beneficence, in the use of outward things; of equity, punctuality, sincerity, and fidelity, in all his transactions, promises, and engagements; of meekness, condescension, courteousness, kindness, and compassion in all his deportment; and of attention to his domesticks, and to all the duties of relative life. He will endeavour to unite wisdom, firmness, and justice, with candour and clemency, in his public conduct; to manifest a disinterested, impartial spirit, to be the patron of the poor, the oppressed, and the friendless; without respecting the persons, or fearing the *unmerited* displeasure of the rich and powerful; and to cleave to what is right, without warping, even when his conduct excites the censures and clamours of an ill-judging multitude. His principles will influence him "to [illegible] righteousness and hate iniquity;" to promote, [illegible] the peace of nations, the good order of the [illegible] and the temporal advantage of all ranks [illegible] But they will also dispose him to render [illegible] still more important purposes; [illegible] "to adorn" and recommend "the [illegible] God our Saviour in all things;" to sof[illegible] and silence their clamours, and [illegible] by making them feel its [illegible] attempt to [illegible] or conform to his [illegible] make hypocrites. [illegible] those in authority. [illegible] consistently with the most com[illegible] They may very properly repress, by

coercive means, various kinds of vice and impiety, and endeavour to exterminate the seminaries and haunts of profligacy and villany, and the schools of blasphemy and profaneness. They may furnish the *endowed* seats of learning with teachers of sound principles and good morals; and countenance every reasonable plan for the good education of youth, and especially for instructing the children of the poor. They may protect from insults, and liberate from restraints, such ministers of the gospel, "as labour in the word and doctrine;" and favour their being placed in extensively useful situations. They may select young persons, who give evidences of piety and ability, and assist them in obtaining that learning, from which their circumstances would otherwise exclude them. They may render the admission into the ministry open to able conscientious men, and close it against the vicious, the ignorant, and the mercenary. They may show a decided regard to upright, diligent, and pious ministers, who differ from them in some forms or sentiments; and a marked disapprobation of the negligent and profligate, who pretend to be of their judgment. Thus authority may be improved as a talent, in promoting the cause of truth and piety; in the religious instruction of the people at large; in preventing the effects of the indolence, carelessness, ignorance, and vice of those who ought to instruct them; and in countenancing such as would do all in their power for this purpose.

Books may also be dispersed, and multitudes taught to read. The attendance on divine worship may be encouraged, and every thing discountenanced that tends to keep men from it. Prisons, work-houses, hos-

pitals, the army and the navy, may be supplied with diligent, able, and pious teachers: and various societies and plans may be formed and adopted, to promote this great end, by rulers and magistrates who are zealous for the honour of Christ, and the interests of pure and undefiled religion; and yet every man be allowed to worship God according to his conscience; and care also taken not to allure mercenary men to an unprincipled conformity. Thus the pious rulers of Judah, *according to the dispensation under which they lived*, restrained vice and idolatry, and supported the worship of Jehovah, from Moses, Joshua, Samuel, and David, even to Nehemiah: and true religion uniformly flourished, in proportion to their prudent and pious endeavours. Nor would it be easy to assign a reason why the same talent may not be improved to similar purposes by Christian rulers, *according to the genius of the new dispensation;* except it be thought, that because *many have abused it by intolerance and tyranny, all the rest ought to bury it in the earth!* a conclusion well suited to the lukewarm indifference, which, in this age, hath succeeded to fiery zeal and cruel bigotry, and assumed the dignified name of moderation! But all judicious Christians will, nevertheless, continue to beseech the Lord to make all kings and rulers, like Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah; that they may be "nursing fathers to the church;" and neither spare pains nor expense to disperse the knowledge of God's word by able, faithful men, throughout whole nations.* But let this suffice on a subject, coincident,

* 2 Chron. xvii. 7—10. xxix—xxxii. Neh. viii.

indeed, *with the plan*, but in some respects, perhaps, out of *the sphere* of these Essays.

II. *Natural abilities, and acquired knowledge*, constitute *a talent* of great importance; as they confer a distinguished reputation, and as they qualify a man to propagate with effect whatever principles he adopts. Nor is there any essential difference *in this respect*, between the more solid, and the more showy kinds of genius and accomplishment; for each gives a proportionable degree of influence in different circles. Philosophers, poets, orators, historians, and other learned and ingenious men, possess a peculiar advantage for giving a good or bad bias to the sentiments and conduct of mankind; though much less ability will enable a man to do extensive mischief, than is requisite for enlarged usefulness; because our fallen nature powerfully inclines to that side. But, alas! it has been abundantly proved, that far more abuse distinguished talents, than make even a tolerable improvement of them: and the fatal success with which the deformity of vice, and the unreasonableness of impiety and infidelity, have been varnished over by vain reasonings, ingenious misrepresentations, and empty declamations, set off with all the charms of style and the authority of deep erudition: and with which the violations of God's law, the neglect of his worship, and the contempt of his gospel have been disseminated, by men of genius and learning, in books of all kinds and on all subjects, can never be sufficiently lamented. Nor has superior eminence in painting, sculpture, or other elegant arts; or the charms of engaging conversation; or the fascinating powers of music; or the talent for fine speak-

ing; or that for theatric imitation of nature and real life, been less fatally abused. If then every one must give an account to God, for the use he makes of his natural and acquired endowments and for the consequences of all his actions, such as have employed 'talents 'angel-bright,' during their whole lives, in doing the work of evil spirits, by poisoning the principles, and corrupting the morals of whole nations, and of successive ages, will one day receive a dreadful recompense for those works, which have given them the most flattering celebrity among their ill-judging fellow-mortals!—A man may, however, employ such endowments in a comparatively inoffensive manner, and yet fall very short of improving his talents. He may so yield to indolence, diffidence, and love of retirement, or be so incapable of coming up to that standard of excellency which he hath fixed for himself; that he may totally slip his opportunity of usefulness; waste the day of life in doing nothing to any purpose; live *plausibly* to himself; and, instead of "occupying with "his Lord's money," or even "giving it to the ex-"changers," he may "hide it in a napkin," and "bury it in the earth." We must not indeed conclude, that all who are reprehensible in this way are "wick-"ed and slothful servants" in their whole character: yet our Lord's language on this subject, and the examples of those who on a death-bed have mourned over the opportunities of usefulness which were then for ever gone, should teach every disciple to be diligent "while the day lasteth, and before the night cometh "in which no man can work."

But evangelical principles will influence the consist-

ent believer, whilst careful not to over-rate his talents, seriously to inquire what advantages they give him for glorifying God and doing good; and to endeavour to avail himself of them, without yielding to inactivity, despondency, fear of difficulties, or regard to the praise of men. A person of this character, who is held in estimation for learning or genius, may be very useful, even by sanctioning with his decided approbation the faithful ministers of Christ; by recommending instructive publications; and by professing and pleading for the doctrines of genuine Christianity, answering objections to them, and stating them in a clear and scriptural manner. His character will introduce him to numbers, from whom his undistinguished brethren are excluded; and give a sphere of activity in which he may subserve the temporal interests of mankind: and his principles will influence him to improve these advantages, that with prudent zeal he may recommend the gospel to them. As books written by ministers of religion are read with an *absurd prejudice;* (for who objects to a treatise on medicine, because it was written by an eminent practitioner in physic?) so the learned and ingenious among the laity may do eminent service, by a testimony from the press to the truths of religion, which will not have this prejudice to encounter: and the poor especially will be exceedingly prepossessed in favour of such plain tracts, as men of this character condescend to write and disperse among them. And surely none will deliberately maintain, that superior talents may be better employed, than in recommending those things "which angels desire to look "down into;" and in glorifying Christ and promoting

the salvation of souls. Learned men might also do eminent service, if they would infuse into those approved publications on various subjects, by which they attract the attention of mankind, a savour of evangelical religion; as an antidote to the poison conveyed in the poems, histories, and scientific treatises, which are sent out by the enemies of revealed truth.—In short, the consistent Christian will take care not to abuse his endowments in any way to do mischief to mankind, whatever lucre or credit it might procure him; and he will endeavour, with persevering diligence, to do good in the world by every means in his power: and if he have only a mediocrity of talent, he will occupy with it according to the duty of his station, as one who expects the coming of his Lord, and desires to be numbered with those faithful servants whom he will bid to enter into his joy.

III. The *pastoral office* is a subject of too great importance, to admit of any adequate discussion in this place. Yet, *as a talent that demands improvement*, it must not be wholly omitted. Such persons, as have been mentioned, may often be led to examine how far the due improvement of their talents may require them to enter into this sacred office; and though many considerations may induce them to decline it; yet the love of ease and lucre, or the fear of contempt, should not deter them. The sacred ministry is, in all respects, a *good work;* and he who desires to be the Lord's steward in so important a concern, should carefully scrutinize his motives and intentions, and seek, with unremitting diligence and fervent prayer, every qualifica-

tion for the due performance of it. Alas! what numbers utterly neglect these things, and rush into this most sacred and important office, from the lowest motives, and in the worst manner imaginable! Let us pity and pray for them, for in general, "they know "not what they do;" and perhaps they who design them for this profession, and they who concur in admitting them into it, have the greater guilt.

The Apostle's message to Archippus may be considered as addressed to all who are actually entered: "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received "of the Lord, that thou fulfil it."* Such are "*stew-*"*ards* of the mysteries of God;" *ambassadors* for Christ to sinners; *watchmen* to give warning, as they will answer for it at their peril; *shepherds* "to feed the "flock of God, which he hath purchased with his "blood;" *labourers* in his vineyard, and *builders* in his holy temple. Surely then they who have received such a ministry, should renounce "the works of dark-"ness," and "the hidden things of dishonesty;" they "should take heed to themselves and to their doc-"trine;" "and they should labour and not faint," but "endure hardship," and face danger "as good "soldiers of Jesus Christ." They should be "instant "in season and out of season;" and laying aside all worldly pleasures, diversions, and pursuits; all avarice, ambition, and mere secular studies, which subserve not the end of their holy calling; they should devote their hours, health, abilities, and influence to the service of the sanctuary, "giving themselves wholly

* Col. iv. 17.

"thereunto." Nothing, however lucrative, creditable, or congenial to their taste, should engross those powers and that time, which they have most solemnly engaged to employ in seeking the salvation of souls: for the desire of spending their lives in this good work, in preference to more lucrative and easy situations, seems to be that very call of the Holy Ghost, by which men are indeed, "moved to take this sacred office upon them."

The consistent believer, therefore, whether his office in the church be more exalted or more obscure, will certainly endeavour to improve it as a talent, by all means in his power, and with steady perseverance. His example, domestick concerns, converse, doctrine, publick ministry, private labours from house to house, attention to the instruction of children, influence over his brethren in the ministry, occasional services, employment of time spared from necessary duties, or money saved from current expenses, will all be adverted to in subserviency to the end he has in view; he will delight in his work, study the Scriptural rules and examples for his conduct, and pray to be made an able minister of Jesus Christ. But they, who are concerned in this subject, may easily enlarge on these hints in their private meditation.

Wealth is a talent intrusted by the great Proprietor of the world to some for the good of many. It is frequently so wasted in gratifying all the [illegible] "the lust of the flesh, the lust [illegible] and the pride of life;" or so hoarded up [illegible] that it is considered in Scripture

as exceedingly dangerous to the souls of those who possess it.* Yet the wise man had reason to say, that "money answereth all things,"† as it may be extensively useful to others, and thus eventually profitable to the faithful steward himself; and "the wisdom that is from above," will teach the Christian to make this use of it. The wealthy are not required in Scripture to part with their estates; nor is it generally advisable to abolish *all distinction* between them and their inferiors in their style of life. Nay, such men as are engaged in lucrative business, provided it be lawful and they are on their guard against its snares, will generally be more useful by carrying it on as the Lord's servants, and using its profits as his stewards; than by retiring from it in the prime of life, to a situation which perhaps hath not fewer snares, and certainly inferior advantages for doing good.—The consistent believer, however, will be influenced by his principles to retrench a variety of superfluous expenses, and exceedingly to moderate his desires of providing for his family, that he may raise a fund for charitable and pious uses; and whilst he shows a readiness for every good work, by which the wants and miseries of men may be relieved; he will especially endeavour to render all his liberality subservient to the more important interests of religion. This may be attempted by disseminating divine truth in the world, as the only seed of genuine piety and holiness, dispersing useful books, assisting in the religious education of children, train-

* Matt. xix. 23—26. 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. 17—20.

† Eccles. x. 19.

ing up pious young men for the ministry, or in various ways promoting the faithful preaching of the gospel. Wealth gives a man *influence* also; and the affluent Christian may use this *influence* to important purposes; and when the *leisure* it affords is accompanied by a suitable turn of mind, he may do more good by an edifying example, pious converse, and prudent efforts, in his own sphere, (from which others are often excluded,) than by retiring from it, even though he should expend in charity what would be saved by that measure. His conduct may likewise be rendered very useful among his tenants, domesticks, and neighbours: and if he frequently disperse his charity with his own hands, accompanied by his pious exhortations, and affectionately serious discourse, it will have a vast effect in conciliating men's minds to his religious principles. But indeed, the reflections already made, suffice to show in general how his talent may be improved; and particulars on so copious a subject, in this compendious Essay, can scarcely be expected —only it may be added that far more should be thus employed, than commonly is.

They also, who are in more narrow circumstances, yet have a talent to improve even in this respect. Much might be saved from superfluous expenses by most Christians, to employ in those good works which are "through Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of "God." Nay, such as labour working with their hands, are expected to give something to those that are in want.*

* Eph. iv. 28.

This specimen may illustrate what is meant by "*the improvement of talents.*" Many others might properly be mentioned; but brevity must be consulted.—*Time* is an universal talent which every Christian should *redeem* from useless ways of *killing*, that he may employ it in some beneficial manner: for idleness is intolerable in a disciple of Him who, "went "about doing good." Every man has influence in his own circle, however contracted, and may approve it to good purposes. For did we duly consider our obligation to God our Saviour, the great end for which our lives are continued, and the near approach of death; a desire would be excited in our hearts to live to his glory, and to serve our generation; and this would influence us to improve all our advantages to this purpose. And were every professor of the gospel thus steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the "work of the Lord;" the blessed effects that would follow, may in a measure be conceived, but can never be fully estimated.

ESSAY XXIII.

On Prayer.

AS "every good, and every perfect gift is from "above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;" so none of those things that accompany salvation, can be done in a proper manner and to good effect, except as we seek communications from God by the prayer of faith. It must therefore be essential to the design of this compendious publication, to treat expressly on a subject of such great use and importance.

The worship, which the Lord requires of us, may be distinguished into *adoration*, *thanksgiving*, and *supplication*. Contemplating the glories of his nature, as displayed in his works, and revealed in his word, we express our reverential awe of his greatness and majesty, and our admiring love of his infinite excellency, by adoring praises, and by celebrating the honour and harmony of all his attributes; recollecting our personal obligations unto him, as our Creator, Providential Benefactor, and Saviour; we declare our grateful sense

of them in thanksgiving, general and particular; whilst the desire of holiness and happiness, and the love of our fellow creatures, joined to a conviction of our weakness and poverty, and a confidence in the Lord's goodness and mercy, dictate prayers for ourselves and others; and in all these respects we render to the Lord the glory due to his name. In speaking therefore more particularly concerning *prayer*, it is not meant to exclude or overlook the other parts of divine worship; but rather to consider them as connected with it, and as bearing a proportion to the enlargement of our hearts, "in making our requests known unto God." Yet as prayer is especially the employment of poor and helpless sinners on earth, and the introduction to those praises and thanksgivings, which are anticipations of the work and worship of heaven; so it may be proper, in this place, to confine our inquiries *principally* to this part of divine worship.

Prayer, in its very nature, is the expression of *dependence*, *indigence*, *desire*, and *expectation*. Petitions can scarcely be offered with propriety to those, on whom a man has no kind of dependence. The rich will rather buy than beg; but he that has no money, and is unable to earn any, is likely to be induced by necessity to the humiliating expedient of supplicating relief. Yet he cannot heartily ask those things of which he is not in want, or which he feels no desire to obtain. And at last, whatever his dependence, indigence, or desires may be, he will not be disposed to petition any one, whom he considers as totally unable or unwilling to relieve him.

Prayer, therefore, in the most general sense, implies

a belief, and contains an acknowledgment, of the being and perfections of God, of his presence with us, and of our dependence on him for "life, and breath, "and all things." It includes a consciousness that we are insufficient for our happiness; that we cannot defend ourselves from dangers and calamities, nor secure our lives, health, limbs, senses, mental powers, possessions, and relatives; that we cannot obtain the sure supply of all our wants, nor find comfort in life or death; and that all our fellow creatures are unable to do these things for us. It further supposes, that we *earnestly desire* the things for which we pray; and believe that the Lord is able, and hope that he is willing, to grant the requests which we present unto him. "He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, "and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently "seek him."* It is therefore evident, that all who deny the particular providential government *of God*; and so ascribe every thing to second causes, independently producing their effects, by chance or necessity, as to exclude the immediate operation of the Great First Cause, cannot with any propriety of language be said to pray. Whatever sense they may have of their indigence, and whatever may be their hopes and desires, they cannot feel a dependence on God, or form expectations of help from him; and every expression which seems like prayer, is either used by such men as a mere expletive without meaning, or it must be a virtual renunciation *in that instance* of their avowed principles.

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* Heb. xi. 6.

But we are not so much concerned to enquire about the prayer that might be offered by *rational creatures*, who, however faultless, are, *in themselves*, indigent and dependent; as about that of *fallen and ruined sinners:* for such we all are. This part of worship, indeed, may be considered as a duty required by the divine law: for the command "of loving God with all our "hearts," certainly requires all men to beg of him to make them happy in his favour and presence; and sinners, (if allowed to hope for such a blessing,) must surely be bound to desire and ask for this forfeited felicity; for how can any reasonable being be supposed to love God supremely, who does not desire, and will not request restoration to his favour, renewal to his image, the enjoyment of his love, and the capacity of glorifying him?

Nevertheless, prayer is *here* considered especially as *a mean of grace*, to which we are directed and encouraged by the gospel. It is, therefore, in this sense, an expression of our entire dependence on the unmerited mercy of God, as justly condemned transgressors, for pardon, acceptance, and all things pertaining to eternal salvation. It springs from "poverty of spi-"rit;" or a humble consciousness that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and "naked;"* that we have neither wisdom, righteousness, holiness, strength, nor any disposition and ability for those things to which we are exhorted by the word of God; and that none of our fellow-creatures can give us any effectual help, in this our deplorable

* Rev. iii. 17, 18.

condition. It implies sincere and vigorous desires, yea, hungerings and thirstings after God and spiritual blessings, (which cannot be bribed, diverted, or assuaged by worldly things,) arising from a deep conviction of mind, that the declarations of Scripture concerning a future state, the resurrection of the dead, judgment, heaven, and hell, are great realities, compared with which, all else is a vanishing dream, and an empty shadow; and it imports also, that we have a prevailing persuasion and hope, notwithstanding our sinfulness and helpless misery, that the Lord is ready to bestow eternal blessings on all who apply for them in the way of his appointment. These convictions, desires, or preparations of heart for prayer,* admit of various degrees; but without some measure of them, no man is capable of praying aright. They who are wise in their own eyes, cannot be disposed to ask wisdom of God; the publican's prayer cannot be the language of the proud Pharisee's heart; nor the sensual, avaricious, or ambitious, *sincerely* request the mortification of their favourite passions, or the renewal of their souls to the divine image; unless some contrary influence hath begun to change their judgment and dispositions.

Hence arises that difficulty which men generally experience about prayer, and the need they have of *forms* and *helps*, even in their most secret retirement; for, *in this case*, such forms are often a vain effort to teach a man to pray for those blessings, which are diametrically opposite to his determinate judgment, and to the

* Ps. x. 17.

prevailing inclinations of his heart. The starving wretch, whose urgent wants have overcome his reluctancy to beg, needs only encouragement, and words flow spontaneously from his genuine desires of relief; but the rich man, who should choose to act the beggar, must learn his part and how to perform it, by rule, study, and practice. The fears, hopes, and desires of the condemned criminal, inspire him with an energetick, though perhaps rude eloquence, when allowed to supplicate the clemency of his prince; and even the little child finds apt words to ask his parent for food, and to complain of cold or pain. Why then cannot men find language, when they would beseech the Lord to give them the blessings promised in his word? Because the *state of their hearts is so contrary to those blessings*, that they feel no want nor desire of them. Did experience prove that the Lord uniformly conferred health, long life, wealth, success, and honour on all that prayed for them, men would generally get over their reluctancy to this humiliating service, (notwithstanding their natural independence of spirit;) and find no difficulty in framing pertinent, earnest, and importunate petitions for things so suited to their carnal minds. Yet they find themselves not only *reluctant*, but *strangely at a loss*, when they would pray for spiritual gifts. Wherefore? Because they are not congenial to the desires of their hearts. When our Lord on earth "went about doing good," they, who felt their miseries, and earnestly desired relief, expecting it from his power and love, applied to him with suitable and earnest petitions: but others were more ready to say with the unclean spirit, "what

" have I to do with thee, Jesus; I beseech thee, tor-
" ment me not;" or to " intreat him," with the Ga-
darenes, " to depart out of their coasts;" than to cry
after him, " Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy
" upon me." *Pride*, therefore, *a carnal mind, alien-
tion from God, contempt of spiritual blessings*, and
unbelief, are the sole reasons, why men neglect pray-
er, or are unable to pray aright, except by the teach-
ing of the Holy Spirit.

But when we consider how great, glorious, and holy the Lord is, and how guilty and vile we are; the question seems not so much to be, whether the sinner *ought* to pray; as whether he *may be allowed to* come with his supplications into the presence of his offended Sovereign? The humble and self-abased *will not* doubt, but that the permission given to a rebellious worm, to present a petition for pardon and salvation to the glorious God, is an act of grace; and indeed, it is always looked upon as such, when a prince receives a petition from a rebel under a deserved sentence of condemnation. But the Scripture places this matter in a much stronger light; for the whole *legal* constitution, concerning the sanctuary, the veil, the priesthood, and high-priesthood, the sacrifices and burning of incense, and especially the great day of atonement, (on which alone even the high-priest might enter within the veil to the mercy-seat, with the blood of the sin-offerings, and the smoke of the fragrant incense,) were most evidently designed to show what intervening obstacles must be removed, before the God of infinite justice and holiness could, consistently with his glory, permit sinners to approach him even

on a mercy-seat, to present their humble supplications for pardon and reconciliation. And though under the New Testament we are invited "to come "boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain "mercy, and find grace to help in time of need:" yet we have no access, except by "the new and "living way, which Jesus hath consecrated for us, "through the *veil*, that is to say his flesh," given as a sacrifice for sin,* and by his high-priesthood, which is the substance of all those ancient shadows. Whilst, therefore, we speak of the encouragements given to the vilest of sinners, even from the first moment that they desire mercy, to present their prayers before the throne of grace; and whilst we determine, that prayer is a part of the worship required of us by the divine law, and, therefore, an universal duty; we should never forget, that it is a most surprising instance of the Lord's condescension and compassion, and one of our most valuable privileges, that we are allowed to make our requests known unto him, with well grounded hopes of acceptance; for those actions may be *our* indispensable duty, which through our guilt and pollution it may yet be totally improper for the Lord to accept at our hands.†

In order to encourage the *prayers of sinners*, the Lord displays his glory from *a throne of grace;* here he "waits to be gracious," and to dispense pardon and every blessing, to all who ask for them by faith in Jesus Christ. Had he been revealed merely as seated on a *throne of glory*, sustaining the character of

* Heb. iv. 6. x. 19—22. † Is. i. 11—15.

a righteous Law-giver, and an impartial Judge, a kind friend to the obedient, but a terrible revenger of the rebellious; it might well have been said, "Jehovah "reigneth, let the people tremble:" but as he hath made himself known on a *mercy-seat* as "God in "Christ, reconciling the world unto himself;" it may be said, "the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." The whole plan of the gospel, as it relates to the person, righteousness, atonement, and mediation of Emmanuel, is evidently intended to give encouragement to the trembling sinner to seek mercy from the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The general invitations of the gospel supersede the necessity of inquiring who MAY come in this new and living way? "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, "let him come." The feast of divine love is provided, "all things are ready;" and the messengers of salvation are not only commanded to invite all they meet, but even "to compel them to come in," by every argument, persuasion, expostulation, and encouragement they can devise; for these are the means, by which the Holy Spirit produces the willing mind, and gives the praying heart. The very appointment of this way of applying for salvation, is a complete encouragement to all who feel desires after the blessings of the gospel, and are willing to become humble supplicants for them; as it implies that the Lord purposes to bestow them as free gifts on indigent beggars; and not on those who would buy, earn, or deserve them. For in this case prayer is the very language of poverty and distress, which guilt alone hath brought on any part of the rational creation of God.

Every general command or exhortation, therefore, to pray, is an encouragement to all who desire to pray; and whatever guilt they have contracted, or in whatever depths of temptation and misery they are plunged, it says to them, "Be of good comfort, arise, he call-"eth thee." Such general exhortations abound in Scripture; they are often addressed to the vilest transgressors, and are commonly connected with absolute promises; "Ask, and it shall be given;" "for every "one that asketh receiveth, &c."*—Such promises do not indeed, engage that God will hear the prayers of the formal, the hypocrital, or the impenitent, who may (like the unclean spirit,) pray *very sincerely*, "torment me not," and yet hate true religion as much as ever; for "the prayers of the wicked are an abomi-"nation to the Lord." But when the vilest transgressor is so far humbled and softened, as to pray from his heart for mercy and grace, and all the blessings of salvation, as "the gift of God through Jesus Christ;" he begins "to offer the prayer of the upright, in which "the Lord delighteth."†

These assurances are confirmed by the examples of Scripture; when Menasseh, vile as he had been, began to humble himself, and pray to the Lord; he was not upbraided with his abominable crimes, but mercifully accepted, pardoned, and delivered.‡ When it could be said of persecuting Saul, "behold he prayeth!" no

* Is. lv. 7, 8. Jer. xxix. 11—13. xxxiii. 3. Ezek. xxxvi. 5—7. 37. Zech. xii. 10. Matt. vii. 7—11. John iv. 10. Acts viii. 22.

† Prov. xv. 8, 9. ‡ 2 Chron. xxxiii.

further doubt remained of his acceptance and reconciliation. The publican, who loathed himself as much as the pharisee disdained him, and who, not daring to come near, or "to lift up his eyes unto heaven, smote "upon his breast and said, God be merciful to me, a "sinner;" went down to his house justified, rather than he who deemed it presumption in such a wretch to pray. Even the short petition of the almost expiring thief, "Lord remember me, when thou comest in thy king-"dom," received an immediate answer full of astonishing grace. Nor is there one instance upon record, of a single prayer being rejected, except for the hypocrisy, wickedness, and unbelief with which it was presented. To all these encouragements we may add the frequent commendations bestowed on importunity, frequency, and fervency in prayer,* and the testimony of all the servants of God to his readiness to hear and save them, from the most tremendous depths into which their sins had cast them, whenever they were brought to cry unto him, and say, "O Lord, I "beseech thee deliver my soul."

If then the vilest sinner, from the first moment when he desires to pray, is warranted to come with humble hope of being heard and answered; the same considerations should much more enlarge the expectations, and confirm the confidence of those who, "continue," (or *persist,*) "in prayer" from day to day; pleading with persevering importunity, all the promises in the Redeemer's name, and earnestly seeking for that wisdom, strength, grace, and consolation, which may

* Luke xviii. 1—13.

enable them to live to the glory of God, as well as for the pardon of their sins, and the salvation of their souls. "We have not, because we ask not;" we are straitened in ourselves, not in the Lord; and did we more enlarge and multiply our requests, with greater fervency and importunity, we should be enabled to exchange many of our complaints for joyful praises. This is evident in a great degree from our own experience, if we be indeed experimentally acquainted with the life of faith and prayer; for who can deny that his inward supports and comforts, his strength to resist temptation, and to endure labour and suffering, have borne some proportion to his frequency and fervency in prayer?

The word of God contains the most decisive and emphatical language on this subject. The Apostle says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man *avail-* "*eth* much;" yet the only *righteous men* on earth are *penitent believing sinners;* and we are in many passages encouraged to expect the most abundant and surprising answers to the prayer of faith.*—Many curious questions have indeed been started concerning *the efficacy of prayer;* for "vain man would be wise," but "the Lord taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" and such difficulties speedily vanish from the serious humble mind. Yet our Lord himself reminds us, that "our Father knoweth what things we have need of, "before we ask him;"† and it is obvious that prayer

* Jer. xxix. 12, 13. xxxiii. 3. Matt. xviii. 19. Mark xi. 24. John xiv. 13, 14. xv. 7, 16. xvi. 24. Eph. iii. 20. James i. 5—7. v. 15—18. 1 John iii. 22. v. 14, 15.

† Matt. vi. 5—8.

cannot be requisite for the information of Omniscience, or to dispose the God of all grace to supply our wants. But when seriously engaged in, it tends directly to increase our acquaintance with ourselves, with our own character and wants; to lead our attention to the promises of God; to abstract the mind from all selfish and carnal confidences; and thus to bring us into that humble, dependent, and waiting frame of spirit, which is the preparation for duly receiving and using every divine blessing. To pray in a suitable manner is in effect to say, 'Lord, we are poor, vile, helpless, 'wretched creatures; we have no other refuge to flee 'to, we know not what to do, but our eyes are unto 'thee, because we believe that thou art ever ready to 'forgive and save all that call upon thee.' As, therefore, the parent requires the child to ask those things that he intends to give, that the child may feel *his* dependence and obligation, and be brought to a proper disposition towards the parent; so the Lord requires us "to make our requests known unto him," that we may be prepared to receive his intended benefits with thankfulness, to notice his hand in them, and to give him the glory of them. And when our prayers accord to his precepts, are grounded on his promises, imply submission to his providence, and spring from a supreme desire of spiritual blessings; when we pray for those things that are truly good for us, conducive to the advantage of our brethren, or in any way honourable to his name: we cannot expect too much in answer to them; for "He is able to do exceeding abun-"dantly, above all that we ask, or think."

The Scripture abounds with examples of the effi-

cacy of prayer. Abraham ceased to ask, even in behalf of Sodom, before the Lord refused to answer him; and "God remembered Abraham," in preserving Lot from the overthrow,* Jacob "wrestled with "God, and prevailed" with him; and in consequence Esau's heart was softened and his rage disarmed: he set out an enemy, yet met him as a brother.† When Moses prayed, Amaleck was discomfited; and when he pleaded for Israel, the Lord said, "Let me alone, "that I may destroy them." The time would fail to to speak of David, Asa, Jehosphat, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, and many others. Doubtless, the conversion of Saul was an answer to the prayer of dying Stephen; and we suppose that the believers at Damascus were heard in their cries for protection from that cruel persecutor, in a manner beyond their own most enlarged expectations; and so likewise were those at Jerusalem, when they prayed for Peter's deliverance from Herod.‡

But, indeed, except in the case of miraculous interpositions, the same is still experienced, and the more any man has made the trial, the fuller will be his assent to this truth. The christian who has been frequent, fervent, and particular in his supplications for a length of time, has, doubtless, found that many of his petitions, (defective and defiled as he knows them to be,) have been manifestly answered, both in his own temporal and spiritual concerns, and in behalf of others; often beyond his expectations, and contrary to appa-

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* Gen. xviii. 17—33. xix. 29. † Gen. xxxii. xxxiii.
‡ Acts xii.

rent probability. Some requests have also been granted, not exactly in his meaning, but in a far more desirable way. He has prayed for the removal of the "thorn in the flesh:" but the Lord hath answered him by showing the sufficiency of his grace, and employing the trial "to humble and prove him, and to do him "good at the latter end;"* so that the things that seemed the most against him, have most effectually promoted his highest interest. Or he has found his prayers answered, by feeling his mind wonderfully reconciled to a denial, from a conviction that "he "knew not what he asked;" or by a calm serenity in waiting the Lord's time for those things which he had impatiently desired. The causes of his perturbation and anxiety remain, after his prayers have been presented before God; but the solicitude itself has given place to a divine "peace which passeth all understand-"ing;" for "he called on the Lord, and was strengthened "with strength in his soul." In short, he can scarcely produce an instance, in which he "poured out his "heart," with earnestness and importunity, and yet failed of obtaining the blessing he sought, or was not after a time satisfied with the denial. In many cases his intercessions for those around him, have been graciously answered; in others he may still retain hope; and in all he may be assured, that they will return into his own bosom.

The efficacy, therefore, of prayer, to bring light and wisdom into the mind, peace into the conscience, submission into the will, and purity into the affections; to

* 2 Cor. xii. 1—10.

keep our garments clean, our armour bright, and our hearts joyful; to make us strong for the conflict, for service, or for suffering; to obtain sufficiency for our place and work, and a blessing on our endeavours; to secure peace with our enemies, or protection against them; to carry every point that is truly good for us; to bring down blessings on our families, friends and country; to procure peace and prosperity to the church, the conversion of sinners, and the spread of the gospel; and for all things which we can desire or conceive, must be allowed by every man who reverences the Scriptures, or knows what it is, "to walk with God." *Did men speculate and dispute less, and pray more,* their souls would be like a watered garden; fruitful, joyful, beautiful, and fragrant. Prayer is the first breath of divine life: it is the pulse of the believing soul, the best criterion of health or sickness, vigour or debility. By prayer we draw water with joy from the wells of salvation; by prayer faith puts forth its energy, in apprehending the promised blessings, and receiving from the Redeemer's fulness; in leaning on his Almighty arm, and making his name our strong tower; and in overcoming the world, the flesh, and the devil. All other means of grace are made effectual by prayer; every doctrine and instruction produces its effect, in proportion as this is attended to; even grace revives or languishes according to the same rule. Our grand conflict with satan and our own hearts; is about prayer: the sinner feels less reluctance and meets less resistance, in respect of all other means of grace, than in retiring to pour out his heart before God in secret;

and the believer will find his chief difficulty to consist in continuing instant and fervent in his spiritual exercise. If he succeed here, all else will eventually give place before him, and turn out to his benefit and comfort.

It should likewise be remembered that prayer may be either publick, social, or secret. *Publick worship* most honours God, and is the grand end of our assembling together; though few seem thus to understand it. *Social worship* tends greatly to maintain brotherly love, and to bring down blessings on families and societies. But *secret prayer* is the grand mean of maintaining communion with God, and keeping alive the power of religion in the soul. Without this, the others degenerate into formality; and the man himself continues devoid of life, strength, and comfort, in the midst of them. Christians should therefore remember to prepare for publick and social worship, by secret prayer, meditation, and reading the Scriptures; and not yield to the temptation of neglecting the one, by spending too much time in the other.

If we desire to pray aright, we must carefully observe, that the Scripture always calls upon us "to pray "in the Spirit," or "in the Holy Ghost," or rather "by the Spirit:" our first petition, therefore, should be, that the Lord would graciously give us his Holy Spirit, to teach and enable us to pray. When this is duly attended to, a very heartless beginning will often have a bright and encouraging conclusion, and our desires may be too large, even for utterance; but without it, words will often flow, that have little meaning

and no correspondent affections.* We should also be very *particular* in our secret devotions; both in confession, in supplication for temporal and spiritual mercies, according to our circumstances, in thanksgivings, and in prayers for others: for whilst men deal in *general* words, they must either be very short, and superficial, or run into needless repetitions. Occasional ejaculatory petitions also are a blessed addition to stated seasons of retirement.—All our prayers should be *explicitly* offered in the name, and through the intercession, of the divine Saviour; in dependence on his merits, with realizing expectation of success, and in a loving forgiving spirit.

Finally, a thorough acquaintance with the devotional part of the psalms; the petitions contained in other parts of Scripture; and a careful observation of the requests which the sacred penmen offered, the pleas they used, the order and proportion they observed, and the confessions, adorations and grateful praises they intermixed with their fervent supplications for personal and publick, temporal and spiritual mercies, will be more useful to the serious Christian, in this part of religion, than all other helps whatever. Above all, the LORD'S PRAYER, well understood and digested, will teach him what the confidence and leading desire of his heart in every prayer should be; what are the blessings especially to be sought for; and with what moderation and submission he should ask for temporal mercies, compared with the forgiveness of his sins, and deliverance

* Rom. viii. 26, 27.

from temptation and the tempter, from evil and the evil one: that in approaching the throne of grace, he may "seek first the kingdom of God and his righ-"teousness;" assured that "all other things will be "added unto him.

ESSAY XXIV.

On Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

AMONG the ordinances, which the Lord hath appointed in his church, as means of grace and acts of solemn worship, some have, from the earliest times, been distinguished by the name of *Sacraments*. The word *Sacrament* originally signified the military oath which the commanders of the Roman armies required from their soldiers; and these institutions were considered as solemn engagements to be faithful and obedient to Christ, under whose banner all Christians have enlisted. In process of time sacraments were multiplied, which gave rise to immense superstition and absurdity: and as human nature continually verges to extremes, so it may be doubted, whether numbers have not lately been induced too much to disregard all distinctions of this kind. The word, however, is not scriptural; and the nature of the two solemn ordinances, which Protestants consider the only Sacraments under the Christian dispensation, seems in general, to be this: 'In them divine truths are exhibited to our 'senses, and illustrated to our minds, by outward em-

[illegible] and the reception of spiritual blessings is re[illegible] by significant actions. Thus observances [illegible] indifferent, by divine appointment be[illegible] [illegible] of religious worship, honourable to God, [illegible] and positive duties arise, where [illegible] by moral obligation.'

'Baptism is the [illegible] *ordinance of Christiani*[illegible] [illegible] under the old dispensation, from [illegible] the ascension of Christ, was the door of [illegible] and the visible church. It consists in the [illegible] of water to the baptized person, "in the [illegible] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy [illegible]." Water is the universal purifier of our persons, gardens, houses, streets, and cities; it is essential to the beauty and fertility of the earth; and it is the original element from which every liquor, that [illegible] our thirst or exhilarates our spirits, is de-

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* The [illegible] of this compendious publication renders it [illegible] to treat of this subject in a controversial manner; [illegible] and patient investigation, and mature reflection, [illegible] a Pædo-Baptist; and his discussions will con[illegible] [illegible] to those, who coincide with him [illegible] practice. But he considers all as brethren [illegible] Jesus in sincerity:" and would not wil[illegible] who conscientiously differs from him in [illegible] reasonably hopes for similar can[illegible] The disputes about the *mode* and *sub*[illegible] seem to have too long occupied a disproportion; whilst numbers remain ignorant [illegible] of the ordinance itself. Mr. Hen[illegible] well grounded; 'If *infant-baptism* were [illegible] improved, it would be less disputed.'

rived. It is therefore, the constant and most expressive scriptural emblem of the pure and satisfying blessings, conveyed to us by the gospel: especially of the purifying, enlivening, fructifying, and consolatory influences of the Holy Ghost: and many ceremonies of the law, as well as the introductory baptism of John, exhibited these benefits by the use of it. The whole of that happy change, which the Apostle describes, may be denoted by the baptismal water; "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the "Spirit of our God."* This accords with the Lord's promises by his prophet—"Then will I sprinkle clean "water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all "your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse "you;" and with various other passages in the sacred oracles.† Yet Baptism seems more immediately to represent the *purifying of the judgment and affections from the pollution of sin, by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.* The beginning of this work is therefore described with reference to the outward emblem, as being "born of *water* and of the Spirit;" it is called "*the washing of regeneration*, and renewing of the "Holy Ghost, which God our Saviour pours upon "us abundantly;" and it is especially, though not exclusively, meant by "the baptism of the Holy "Ghost."‡

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* 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. Ps. li. 2. 7. Zech. xii. 1. John xiii. 8. xix. 24. Eph. v. 26, 27. 1 John v. 6. Rev. i. 5. vii. 14.

‡ John i. 31—33. iii. 3—8. Tit. iii. 5, 6.

The appointment of this emblem, in the initiatory ordinance of Christianity, emphatically testifies the doctrine of original sin, and the necessity of regeneration: for it declares every man, as "born of the "flesh," to be so polluted, that unless he be washed with purifying water, he cannot be received into the *outward* church of God: and unless he be inwardly cleansed by the Holy Spirit, he cannot be a member of the *true* church. In this, it coincides with circumcision, which implied, that without the mortification of the corrupt nature derived by generation from fallen Adam, and the removal of that obstacle to the love and service of God, no man could be admitted into covenant with him.* And like that ordinance, it is "the seal of the righteousness of faith;" for he, and he alone, who possesses the inward and spiritual grace, which both circumcision and baptism outwardly denoted, has a divine attestation to the sincerity of his faith, and to the reality of his justification in the righteousness of the Redeemer. The form of baptism, "in," or *into*, "the name of the Father, and "of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," contains an unanswerable argument for the doctrine of the Trinity, and constitutes a perpetual profession of it: it implies also that the baptized person is the avowed worshipper and servant of God "the Father, the Son, and "the Holy Ghost," who is become the Salvation and Portion of his people.

When the Apostles went forth "to teach," or *disciple*, "all nations," to baptize them in this name,

* Deut. xxx. 6. Jer. iv. 4. Rom. ii. 28, 29.

and afterwards to teach them more fully all things that Christ had commanded, that they might observe them,* the converts, whether made from among the Jews or Gentiles, were baptized on *an intelligent profession of repentance and faith.* When the Jews made proselytes to their religion, they circumcised the adult males on such a profession, according to the nature of their dispensation; and Pœdo-baptists, in similar circumstances, would adopt the same conduct. But we maintain, (for reasons that have been repeatedly assigned,) that as the Jews circumcised likewise all the males in the families of the proselytes, who were incapable of personally rejecting the Jewish religion; so the Apostles baptized the households of their converts; including the females, and only excluding such, as, being able to answer for themselves, gave evidence, by word or deed, that they did not obey the truth. Nay, we are of opinion that those children, who had one believing parent, though the other continued an unbeliever, were thus admitted, as *relatively holy*, into the visible church of Christ.†

The adult convert, by receiving baptism, acknowledged, according to the obvious meaning of the ordinance, that he was a sinner by nature and practice; that he repented of his sins, and believed in Christ for the forgiveness of them; that he renounced idolatry, and all other objects or forms of worship, "to "serve the one living and true God," in whose name he was baptized; that he cordially believed the truths

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

† Acts xvi. 3. 15. 33. Rom. xi. 16, 17. 1 Cor. i. 16. vii. 14.

of the gospel, and relied on the mercy of the Father, on the mediation of the incarnate Son, and on the grace of the Holy Spirit, for complete salvation; and that he sincerely purposed to forsake all his sins, and every confidence, pursuit, interest, or indulgence, which interfered with these engagements. Thus he openly joined himself to the Lord, according to the new covenant in Christ Jesus; and embracing its benefits as his portion and salvation, he solemnly vowed to renounce the world, deny himself, bear his cross, endure persecution and hardship, and fight against sin and satan, as a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ, to the end of his days; and doubtless prayers, instructions, professions, and engagements to this effect, accompanied the administration of baptism, as circumstances required or admitted of them. Such a solemn transaction would tend exceedingly to confirm the *faith*, to excite the love, to strengthen the mind, and to encourage the hope of the true convert. And though an *hypocritical* profession could answer none of these purposes; yet we cannot determine, that confused views, partial convictions, and general purposes of following Christ, might not frequently issue in true conversion, even by means of this ordinance, and the prayers, instructions, and admonitions, which preceded, attended, and followed it; for it does not become us to limit the operations of the Holy Spirit. The public administration of baptism would likewise honour God, and the Christian religion; establish and edify believers by reminding them of their privileges and vows; make way for subsequent exhortations, admonitions, or censures, in respect of the baptized

person, as occasion required; and excite the attention of numbers to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity.

The baptism of the infant-offspring of such converts was likewise a solemn declaration that they desired the same blessings for their children, as they had chosen for their own portion; and they thus pledged themselves to the church, "to bring them up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord;" giving them every instruction, and using all means of rendering them wise unto salvation. When they brought the children, which were afterwards born to them, to be baptized, they virtually renewed their former profession and engagements, and declared their persevering purpose of instructing and commanding their households in the fear of God; and as the children grew up, such of them as profited by these means, would personally accept of the privileges, and enter into the engagements, peculiar to Christianity, in the manner that will shortly be considered.

As the number of professed Christians increased, the baptism of infants would proportionably grow more common; and when the progress of the gospel among Jews and Gentiles was less rapid, the baptism of adults would not occur so frequently. This accords with facts; and when the progress of error and superstition made way for the nominal conversion, and the baptism, of whole nations, the baptism of adults was seldom heard of, in countries previously professing Christianity. The *indiscriminate administration* of infant-baptism, however, arising from a concurrence of causes during many centuries, has produced many very bad effects; and the abuses, misapprehensions,

and criminal conduct, which too manifestly connect with it, have given many pious persons a rooted aversion to that way of administering the ordinance, and have furnished them with plausible objections against it. But when a serious parent is persuaded, (notwithstanding all these crimes and abuses,) that the baptism of the infant-offspring of believers accords to the word of God, and, in compliance with what he judges his duty, presents his children to be baptized; he solemnly ratifies and renews the profession and engagements of his own baptism; he avows his earnest desire, that the covenant made with him may be for the good of his seed also,* and he engages to bring them up in the faith and obedience of the gospel, as far as his instructions, discourse, example, and prayers can have any influence. As they grow up, he, or other serious relations, may profitably explain to them the nature, meaning, and engagements of *baptism; the* blessings it signifies; the advantages of being thus early admitted into the visible church, and trained up as her children; and the aggravated guilt of deliberately rejecting the salvation and service of God, from pride of heart and carnal affections; or even of neglecting the means of appropriating these advantages, and complying with those engagements, which their parents, or senior friends, had entered into in their name, and for their benefit. Thus an additional avenue is opened to the consciences of young persons, and an additional restraint imposed on their passions.—Ministers also may employ these topicks with

* Jer. xxxii. 38—40. Acts ii. 38, 39.

great advantage, in addressing both the parents and the children, and even such as wish to have their offspring baptized; and if this was done frequently and generally, both in publick and private; if baptism was administered solemnly before the congregation, and proper reference made to it in the sermon; and if some discouraging barriers to these things were removed, the most diffusive good might be expected.

But even as matters now stand, the administration of infant-baptism has great influence, in giving vast multitudes some ideas of the gospel, especially of original sin, regeneration, and the Trinity; and whilst all who act profanely, deceitfully, or formally, in this matter, must answer for their own crimes; if good be done, either to parents, children, or others, and if the name of God be in any measure glorified; the end of the institution is so far answered, even though no special benefit should be thought to accrue to the baptized person. The pious parent may therefore rest satisfied with performing what he considers his duty. If the child live, the transaction may be useful, by way of subsequent improvement; nay, we must allow, that the Holy Spirit may in some cases regenerate the infant, in answer to the prayers of believing friends, even at the time of baptism; without confounding the outward sign with the thing signified, or supposing the sacrament to produce the effect by its own inherent energy. Many other things connected with this subject must be waved, for the sake of brevity, but these hints may perhaps assist some plain Christians to understand the nature of baptism, and their duties and obligations respecting it. The out-

ward sign doubtless will not profit those who live and die without 'the inward and spiritual grace,' even 'a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteous-'ness;' and the conduct of multitudes, who act in direct opposition to the most solemn engagements, entered into for themselves or others, will render their doom more dreadful at the last day, than that of Jews, Mahometans, Pagans, or avowed infidels.

The Lord's supper also calls for our peculiar attention, as it is of the greatest importance in the system of Christianity. When baptized persons give hopeful evidence, that they are partakers of 'the inward and 'spiritual grace,' of the initiatory ordinance; they should be exhorted to make, or renew, a *personal* profession of their faith in Christ, their cordial acceptance of his salvation, and their purpose of living according to his commandments, by joining with his people in receiving the Lord's Supper: for *this seems* to be the *Scriptural* way of making such a profession, whatever *expediency* there may be in other introductory observances.

Nothing can be more simple in its own nature than this institution; though superstition has been peculiarly successful in misrepresenting, obscuring, and perverting it. Our blessed Saviour, the evening before his crucifixion, having celebrated the passover with his disciples, appointed the Lord's supper to be a *memorial* of his redemption, as the paschal lamb had been a *prefiguration* of it. He therefore took bread, and by prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, set it apart to be the representation of his body. He *brake* it, to show that his body must be wounded, bruised,

put to great torture, and undergo death, for the redemption of his people; and he directed each of his disciples to *eat of that bread in remembrance of him*, to instruct them in the way by which his atonement would be made effectual to their salvation. In like manner he took the cup, and, renewing his prayers and thanksgivings, he bade *them all drink of it;* as the wine represented his blood, which was about to be shed to purchase the blessings of the new covenant, and to ratify it in behalf of the whole multitude of believers, for the remission of their sins. The language of Christ in appointing this ordinance, is manifestly *figurative*, and cannot be *literally* interpreted, (unless we should explain the *material cup itself* to be *the blood of Christ*, or rather, *the new covenant;*) and this renders it the more wonderful, that any set of men should be so adventurous and absurd, as to require all the church to believe, in contradiction to their senses, that the bread in the sacrament, after consecration, becomes the real entire body of Christ! But, indeed, the Scripture gives us no intimation of any peculiar mystery in this institution; though strong metaphors are employed, the more emphatically to demand our attention to the importance of the thing signified by the outward emblems.*

From these Scriptures, I apprehend, we may learn in in general, that our Lord commanded all his disciples, every age, to the end of the world, frequently to meet together in his name, and with solemn worship suit-

* Matt. xxvi. 26—28. Mark xiv. 22—24. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 23—25.

able to the occasion, to break, distribute, and eat bread, the most salutary and universal of all viands, and to pour out and drink wine, the most valuable and refreshing of all cordials. This action was intended to be a perpetual memorial of Christ, especially of his body broken, and of his blood shed, for their sins. *The body*, (for that alone could be represented by an outward emblem,) was doubtless put for his *perfect and entire human nature*, as personally united to the eternal Word and Son of God. *His blood*, (the shedding of which was the evident and immediate cause of his death,) denoted the *whole of his expiatory sufferings*, which terminated when he expired on the cross. The dignity, righteousness, and holiness of the Redeemer; the depth of his voluntary humiliation and the intenseness of his agonies; the vastness of his condescension and compassionate love; the deplorable state of deserved misery from which he redeemed sinners; the extensive efficacy of his one oblation, the honour and happiness to which he exalts all true believers; and the discovery made in this great transaction, of the justice and love of God, the excellency of his law, the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, and the importance of eternal things, should all be taken into the account, when we contemplate the death of Christ through the medium of these outward emblems; whilst the action, of *eating the bread* and *drinking the wine*, illustrates the manner in which the sacrifice of Christ becomes effectual; by even feeding on him, in our hearts, by 'faith with thanksgiving.'* The Lord's supper was in-

* John vi. 53—58.

ituted in the evening, and probably the disciples re-
ived it *sitting;* but as no command was given in this
spect, it may well be considered as a matter of in-
fference, in which the validity of the ordinance is not
all concerned.

The very act of receiving the Lord's supper, implies
confession of our guilt and ruined condition, from
hich we could not have been saved, if Jesus had not
ed upon the cross to redeem us; a profession that we
itirely believe the testimony of God, respecting
e person, undertaking, and atonement of Christ, and
e reality, sufficiency and efficacy of his victorious suf-
rings; an avowed dependence on the mercy and grace
God, according to the promises and provision of the
:w covenant, which was ratified by Emmanuel's blood;
acknowledgment of our obligations to this most gra-
ous Benefactor, and an expression of our love and
atitude to him; a sacramental engagement to obey
m as our Lord and Saviour, surrendering ourselves
him, as "bought with a price, to glorify him with
our bodies and spirits, which are his;" and a publick
iiting of ourselves to his redeemed people, to walk
ith them in christian love and fellowship, in all the
dinances of divine worship, and in all holy conversa-
m and godliness.

It is, therefore, most evident, that no man is pre-
red for this sacred ordinance, or capable of sincere-
and intelligently making that profession which is
iplied in it; unless he be indeed a self-condemned
nitent; who really believes the gospel, and renoun-
s all other confidences to "flee for refuge to lay hold
on the hope set before him;" and unless, in his most

secret retirement, he endeavours to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, as his Prophet, Priest, Ruler, and Saviour, purposing thenceforth to walk in obedience to him. The man, who habitually allows himself in known sin, or the neglect of known duty; who harbours pride, envy, malice, avarice, or sensual lusts in his heart; who comes to the sacrament to compensate for his sins, or to cloak his secret transgressions; who attends on it to quiet conscience by a self-righteous service, substituting the outward sign for the thing signified; or who uses it as a *mere* step to secular preferment, must "be guilty of the body and blood of "Christ," and eat and drink his own condemnation. But the humble, trembling penitent, who would apply for salvation through the crucified Saviour, by using the means that he hath appointed, ought not to suspect any snare, or fear any dangers in approaching the Lord's table; even though many doubts *may still* disquiet his mind, or great remaining darkness obscure his views.

When the Corinthians had most grievously profaned this ordinance, and exposed themselves to severe rebukes and corrections, the Apostle did not counsel them to seek for security *by absenting themselves from it;* and though they might doubtless profitably use the advice and assistance of their pastors or brethren, he did not direct them to be satisfied with their decisions; but "to examine *themselves*, and so eat of "that bread, and drink of that cup."* It was incum-

* 1 Cor. xi. 27—31.

bent on them to examine diligently, whether they were in the faith? Whether they did truly repent and believe the gospel? Whether their profession was sincere, and their motives pure? Whether their hearts and lives were consistent with the holy religion they had embraced? Whether they did cordially accept of the whole salvation of Christ, and yield themselves to his service? And whether they came to the Lord's table, "discerning his body," "remembering his love," and seeking communion with him and his saints?

Such self-examination must always become professed Christians; not in order to find out some excuse for neglecting to obey the dying command of their loving Saviour; but in order to remember him with more fervent affection, and more exalted thanksgivings. It is every useful, when we have the opportunity, to set apart some time previously to the administration of the Lord's supper, thus to re-examine ourselves, to inquire into our progress in vital godliness, and to renew in secret our cordial consent to the new covenant in the blood of Christ. Such a preparation is especially important to the new convert, when, (with the instructions and prayers of ministers and pious friends, he first approaches to make this profession; and to the backslider, when he is recovered from his wanderings, and desires to renew the solemn transaction. In all cases, self-examination should be considered merely as introductory to the exercise of repentance and faith, the practice of works meet for repentance, and fervent prayers for divine teaching and grace to enable us more profitably to attend on the ordinances of God; for should any one discover, that at present he

could not approach the Lord's table in a suitable manner, he ought by no means to rest satisfied with absenting himself; but should rather be more earnest in using every means of becoming an acceptable communicant. The believer, however, who *habitually examines himself*, and daily exercises repentance and faith, may very properly receive the Lord's supper without any further preparation, when an unexpected opportunity presents itself.

It is evident, both from Scripture and the earliest records of the primitive church, that this ordinance was administered to the professed disciples of Christ in general, on every Lord's day at least. This frequent recollection of that great event, which is the central point of our holy religion, was exceedingly suited to increase humility, hatred, and dread of sin, watchfulness, contempt of the world, faith, hope, love, gratitude, patience, compassion, meekness, fortitude, and all other holy dispositions.—These are obvious and intelligible advantages of frequent communicating, if it be done in a serious, considerate, and reverential manner; for the Lord's supper as directly tends to strengthen and refresh the believing soul, as the bread and wine do to nourish and invigorate the body. At the same time, due honour is rendered to the Lord, by this repeated profession of our faith and love; the sympathy of pious persons, uniting in so affectionate an ordinance, promotes edification; the great truths of Christianity are thus brought before the minds of increasing numbers; and the presence and blessing of the Lord may confidently be expected, whilst we thus meet in his name, and present our prayers and thanksgivings

before him. Indeed, this institution was expressly intended to "show forth the Lord's death till he come;" and this proves that the doctrine of the *atonement* is the most essential part of Christianity; and an *habitual dependence on a crucified Saviour*, the grand peculiarity of the Christian character.

The abuses, that have taken place in respect of this ordinance, have at length produced a lamentable neglect of it; to the dishonour of the Redeemer, and the increase of that lukewarmness of which it is a manifest indication. No doubt the pharisaical, hypocritical, avaricious, and profane approaches of numbers to the Lord's table, constitute a most heinous sin, which, *unless repented of*, will vastly increase their final condemnation. But they who through ignorance, impiety, carelessness, malice, or *secret crimes*, are unfit for this holy ordinance, are equally unprepared for death and judgment: and when they withdraw, as Christians are about to commemorate their dying Redeemer, they should very seriously recollect that they allow themselves to have no part or lot in the matter. Indeed, they are as incapaple of praying acceptably, as of communicating worthily, whilst they live in wilful opposition to the commands of Christ, and in neglect of his great salvation.

Some persons likewise withdraw, apparently, lest they should make too avowed a profession of religion, or bind themselves too closely to a holy life. As if *this instance of disobedience would excuse their conformity to the world, and contempt of the favour and authority of their Judge!*—Others are harassed with groundless scruples, lest a well meant but unsuitable approach to

the Lord's table should exclude them from future pardon: though even the scandalous profanation of the Corinthians was only visited by temporal corrections, "that they might not be condemned with the world." Or they fear, lest some subsequent fall should render their case desperate; when Peter denied Christ, the very night in which he had both celebrated the passover and the Lord's supper, and yet he was graciously restored. Thus the remainder of unbelief induces many who appear to be pious Christians in other respects to hesitate, and often to refuse obedience to this plain command, during their whole lives; whilst others seem afraid of *communicating too frequently;* or make the langour of their affections a reason for absenting themselves, by which it is exceedingly increased. But let the new convert, who would thrive in his profession, speedily begin to consider this institution, and diliberately prepare for attending on it, as soon as he can do it sincerely: and let the believer gladly embrace every opportunity of communicating; avoid whatever may unfit him for it; and daily remember the vows of God that are upon him to live to him who died for his salvation.

ESSAY XXV.

On the State of separate Spirits; the Resurrection of the Body; Judgment; and Eternity.

IT is the grand design of revealed religion, to draw off our attention and affections from things present and temporal, and to fix them on things future and eternal. Yet, such is the constitution of the universe, and such the plan of the gospel, that the regulation of our pursuits and actions, in subordination to the interests of the unseen state, tends to produce by far the greatest measure of happiness to individuals, and to society, which can possibly be attained in this present life. Whatever conjectures or discoveries the more rational of the heathen had made in this interesting concern, or whatever intimations God had given about it to the ancient church; it may with the strictest propriety be said, that "life and immortality have been "brought to light by the gospel." For the New Testament revelation elucidating and confirming that of the Old, has removed all doubt and uncertainly about a future state of existence, except what arises from

our want of faith, or acquaintance with the holy Scriptures; it hath given every needful instruction on the important subject; and it hath annexed to it that authority, which is suited to render it influential upon our whole conduct. This decisive and complete information is of the greatest moment: for all error, obscurity, or uncertainty in a matter of such vast importance, must proportionably enfeeble and unsettle the mind; and deduct from the efficacy of those motives, which excite or animate the soul to vigorous exertion, self-denying obedience, patient sufferings, or courageously meeting dangers, in adhering to the truth and will of God amidst the opposition of this evil world. Our concluding Essay, therefore, will contain some thoughts on the intermediate state; the second coming of Christ; the resurrection of the body; and the process, rule, and event, of judgment.

The immortality of the soul is fully established by the uniform testimony of Scripture; which fully declares, not only that it *is created capable of endless existence*, but also that *it is the unalterable purpose of the Creator it should exist to eternity.* It is impossible in the nature of things, that this should be proved by any reasonings or arguments whatever; because the *intention* of God can be known by express revelation alone.

The language of holy writ constantly implies, that the soul is capable of exerting its powers and faculties, in a state of separation from the body. The Apostle could not tell "whether," during his vision, "he were "*in the body*, or out *of the body;*"* and he spoke of

* 2 Cor. xii. 1—3.

being "absent from the body and present with the "Lord."* We frequently read of "the things done "*in the body:*" which implies that the same agent is capable of doing things *out of the body*. "Our earthly "house of this tabernacle must be dissolved, that we "may have a building of God, a house not made with "hands, eternal in the heavens."† "Then the body "shall return to the dust, and the spirit to God:"‡ Accordingly we read of "the spirits of just men made "perfect," as well as of "an innumerable company "of angels:"§ and even these brief hints may suffice to show, that the system of modern materialists cannot be supported, (any more than the other doctrines of the same school,) except by rejecting the word of God, and treating the sacred writers as men who espoused and propagated vulgar errors, whilst they professed to "speak as they were moved by the Holy "Ghost."

The Scriptures likewise teach us, that both the righteous and the wicked, immediately on leaving the body, enter on a state of happiness or misery. Lazarus was carried, as soon as he died, into Abraham's bosom; and when "the rich man died and was buri-"ed, in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments;" whilst his brethren, in his father's house, were following him to the same state of misery. Should it be urged, that this is a parabolical representation, we answer, that He who is the TRUTH itself would never have spoken those things, even in a parable, which have a direct tendency to mislead the reader, and to

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* 2 Cor. v. 8. † 2 Cor. v. 1. ‡ Eccles. xii. 7. § Heb. xii. 22, 23.

raise an expectation of a state which has no existence. But, indeed, our Lord was pleased to confirm this inference by his address from the cross to the dying thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise;"* which could not have been the case, unless his soul had existed in a state of happiness, whilst his body lay buried with that of the other malefactor. They, therefore, who deny this distinction between soul and body, must suppose our Lord, as well as his Apostles, to have been mistaken.—His answer likewise to the Sadducees, who cavilled about the doctrine of the resurrection, is equally decisive against those who deny *the intermediate state;* for "as God is not the God of the "dead, but of the living," how can he be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, if they have been *wholly dead* during so many revolving centuries?†

The Apostle "had a desire to depart and to be "with Christ, as *far better*," than living on *earth; but* he would not have been any sooner *with* Christ for departing hence, if he were to lie entirely under the power of death, until the resurrection; nor could he "be *present with the Lord*, when *absent from the* "*body*," if never made capable of beholding him till his second coming.‡ The souls of those, to whom Christ, by his Spirit in Noah, preached, during the term of God's long-suffering while the ark was preparing, are represented as being *in prison* at the time when Peter wrote;§ and John was directed to write, "blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord, *from*

* Luke xvi. 22—31. xxiii. 43.
† Matt 22—32.
‡ 2 Cor. v. 8.
§ 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

" *henceforth*, even so saith the Spirit."* Yea, he saw an innumerable company before the throne, who were crying for vengeance on their persecutors; but were required to wait till the rest of their brethren had finished their testimony; which, however interpreted, must precede the resurrection of the dead.† And here it may be proper to repeat the observation, that the God of truth and love would not arrange even the circumstances of a vision in such a manner, as directly tended in the most obvious interpretation to mislead men in so material a point. These are a specimen of those scriptural arguments, by which we are induced to expect an immediate entrance into happiness or misery, as soon as we leave this world, by an anticipation of that sentence which will be publickly pronounced at the day of judgment.

Various absurd notions, and curious speculations, have been formed about this intermediate state; which the use of the word translated *Hell*, for *the place of separate spirits*, may have in part occasioned. Thus the Messiah, by the royal prophet, expressed his confidence in the Father, " that he would not leave his " soul in *hell*, neither suffer his Holy One to see cor- " ruption."‡ Many learned men, indeed, would explain both these expressions to denote *the grave*, by a very unnatural tautology; but scarcely any thing can be more evident, than that by *Hell* is meant *the place of separate spirits*, to which the human soul of Christ repaired, as soon as his body was laid in the grave, till their re-union at his glorious resurrection.

* Rev. xiv. 13. † Rev. vi. 9—11.
‡ Psalm xvi. 10. Acts ii. 27—31.

The Scripture seems in general only to inform us that the souls of the righteous, when their earthly tabernacle is taken down, are made perfect in knowledge, purity, and love; being freed from all remains of sin, removed from every temptation, made conquerors over all their enemies, exempted from all labours, sorrows, fears, and distresses, and admitted into the presence of Christ, to behold his glory, and enjoy his love; that they are qualified to join the rapturous worship of angels, and to share their felicity in the full completion of all their spiritual desires, in communion with God, and in the society of holy beings; that their joys far exceed all that they could on earth conceive or imagine, and are fully adequate to their most enlarged capacities, though proportioned to the degree of their grace and fruitfulness on earth; that nothing is wanting to the absolute *completion of* their happiness, but that re-union with *their* bodies, for which they wait in joyful hope, assured that then "mortality shall be swallowed up of life;" and that with adoring acclamations, they witness the Redeemer's triumphs on earth, and the accomplishment of those prophecies, for which they fervently prayed whilst here they fought the good fight of faith. On the other hand, it is manifest from the sacred oracles, that the souls of the wicked, when they leave the body, "are "driven away in their wickedness," under condemnation and the wrath of God, and under the power of their vile affections, now freed from all restraint; and that thus they immediately sink into a state of despair, and punishment proportioned to their crimes; in which they will continue till the day of judgment, in

dire expectation of that event to complete their misery, by re-uniting them to their bodies, the instruments of their crimes, and sharers with their souls in the righteous vengeance of their offended Creator.

After the souls of successive generations shall have been thus gathered to their own company, and their bodies shall have returned to the ground whence they were taken, the end will at length arrive: when "the "Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his "mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance "on them that know not God, and that obey not the "gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be "punished with everlasting destruction from the pre-"sence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and "to be admired in all them that believe."* The divine Saviour will then personally appear in the clouds, even as the Apostles beheld him when he ascended into heaven.† "For the Lord himself shall descend "from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the "Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the "dead in Christ shall rise first."‡ This will be accompanied by *the change* of all such believers as shall then be found alive upon earth.§ The resurrection of all others, who shall have died from the creation of the world to this grand consummation of all things, will afterwards take place: and then the earth and all its works will be burnt up by one general conflagration. No words, however, can possibly explain, illustrate,

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* 2 Thess. i. 7—10. †Acts i. 11. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 15—17.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

or enable the reader to frame any adequate conception of this majestic, tremendous, yet most delightful scene, or the different emotions of the righteous and and the wicked during this astonishing catastrophe. What a spectacle of grandeur and horror would the conflagration of one large city present, were it all at once in flames! What then will be the prospect exhibited to the innumerable spectators, when "the "heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the "elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also "and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up."* When universal nature shall, as it were, expire in convulsions! when the hautiest rebels shall call in vain for rocks and mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of their offended Judge! and when all possibility of escape or mercy, shall vanish for ever!

"The hour is then coming, in which all that are in "the graves shall hear the voice of Christ, and shall "come forth: they that have done good to the resur-"rection of life: and they that have done evil to the "resurrection of damnation."† "*The multitudes* that "sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to "everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting "contempt:"‡ and "there shall be a resurrection "both of the just and of the unjust." As the body is a part of our nature, and the instrument of the soul in doing good or evil; so it is meet that it should be raised from the dead, to share the happiness or misery, which shall be awarded to every one according to his works, by the righteous Judge of the world.

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* 2 Pet. iii. 10—13. † John v. 28, 29. ‡ Dan. xii. 2.

Little, however, is spoken in Scripture concerning the resurrection of the wicked, compared with the copious information there afforded concerning the that of the righteous. By the omnipotent word of Him, "who is "the Resurrection and the Life," the bodies of his redeemed people shall first be raised from the dust of the earth, from the depths of the sea, and from every place in which they have been deposited; and being restored to life, incorruptible, immortal, and glorious, they will be re-united to their immortal souls, to participate and increase their unspeakable felicity. For "the Lord Jesus shall change our vile body, that it "may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, ac- "cording to the working whereby he is able even to "subdue all things to himself."*

We know what appellation the Apostle bestowed on those, who, cavilling at his doctrine, inquired "how "are the dead raised? and with what bodies do they "come?" Questions about *identity*, and difficulties started about the *possibility* of a resurrection, may answer the purposes of a proud sceptickal philosophy: but the humble disciple, sitting as a little child at the Saviour's feet will allow, "that such knowledge is too "high for him, he cannot attain unto it;" and perceive that it is meet to answer all such objections by saying, "hath God spoken, and shall he not do it;" "Can "any thing be too hard for the Lord?" We are sure that our bodies will be so far raised the same, that we shall know ourselves to be the same persons, who did such and such things on earth: but "as we must all "be changed," our bodies will not be *in every respect*

* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

the same. "There is a natural body, and there is a "spiritual body;" the "image of the first, and of the "second Adam;" "and as we have borne the image "of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the "heavenly:" "that which is sown in corruption, dis- "honour, and weakness, shall be raised in incorrup- "tion, glory, and power." "Flesh and blood cannot "inherit the kingdom of God;" but he will give every one his own body, even as he gives to every seed an increase of the same kind that was sown.* When we reflect on the resplendent appearance of Christ on the mount of transfiguration; and further recollect, that the beloved disciple, who leaned on his breast at table, fell at his feet as dead when he appeared to him in glory; we shall find our views enlarged, and expect to receive a body at the resurrection beyond expression glorious and beautiful, and as much superior to these bodies of our humiliation as the heavens are above the earth. They will be liable to none of the wants, decays, disorders, or grossness, of our present animal frame: no longer will they retard our motions, or impede us in contemplation and devotion: but they will be suited to assist and increase the most sublime and rapturous joys of our immortal souls to all eternity. And, however it may appear to us at present, we shall doubtless find the resurrection of our bodies to be an immense accession to our happiness, and to our capacity of enjoying and glorifying God.

Whilst the Scripture states the *order* of the resurrection, and intimates that the final justification of be-

* 1 Cor. xv.

lievers shall precede the resurrection of the wicked, that they may be assessors with Christ in judging men and angels;* it also speaks more fully on the *grounds* of their admission to the glorious inheritance prepared for them, in language which implies that the whole assembled world shall be made acquainted with them. Nothing can be more august than the description given of this tremendous day of God. The Apostle in vision, "saw a great white throne, and Him that sat "thereon, from whose face the heaven and the earth "fled away, and there was no place left for them."† No words can more emphatically declare the sovereign authority, and the infinite power, justice, and holiness, of the Judge. "He saw the dead also, both small and "great, stand before God; and the books were open-"ed." This declares the discoveries that will be made, when omniscience shall "bring to light the hidden "things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels "of all hearts;"‡ the perfect recollection, and full conviction, which every one will then have of all his thoughts, words, actions, motives, and intentions, however they had previously been mistaken or forgotten; the judgment to be made of the whole by the perfect rule of the divine command; and the final condemnation of all, "whose names are not found writ-"ten in the book of life." This likewise implies, that none can abide the severity of that impartial judgment, except those who are interested in the new covenant mediated by the Son of God: whilst we are taught, by "death and hell being cast into the lake of

* 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. † Rev. xx. 11—15. ‡ Cor. iv. 1—3.

fire, that all the saints will be finally delivered from death, suffering, and every consequence of sin which will from that period be wholly destroyed, or rather confined to those who perish in their sins.

The Apostle Paul declares that "we must all *ap-* "*pear*," or *be made manifest in our true character*, "before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one "may receive the things done in his body, according "to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* The same interesting truth is exhibited under various parables or similitudes; "Every tree, that bringeth "not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast "into the fire," the tares shall be separated from the wheat; the corn from the chaff; and the man without the wedding garment from the welcome guests. "At "the end of the world, the Angels shall come forth, "and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall "cast them into the furnace of fire; *there* shall be "wailing and gnashing of teeth."† Indeed, all the descriptions, which are given us of this grand event, relate especially to the case of those who have the benefit of revelation: but we are expressly told that "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and "all the holy Angels with him: then shall he sit upon "the throne of his glory; and before him shall be "gathered *all nations*, and he shall separate them one "from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from "the goats."‡ This he will do with perfect ease, certainty, and impartiality: he will pronounce the final

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* 2 Cor. v. 10. † Mat. xiii. 41—43. 49, 50.
‡ Mat. xxv. 31—46.

sentence with absolute authority, from which there can be no appeal; execute it with a power to which all resistance will be vain; and display the propriety of it so clearly as to silence every objection. These things are suited to give us the most exalted apprehensions of the Judge himself, who "shall come in "his *own glory*," as mediator, "and in the glory of "the Father," exercising all divine perfections through the medium of the human nature; so that this will be "the *appearing of the glory* of the great God, and "our Saviour Jesus Christ."* Then "every eye "shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and "all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of "him. Even so, Amen."†

But when "the books shall be opened," it will appear that many of those who had been guilty of numerous and heinous crimes, during a great part of their lives, had at length truly repented, and believed in Christ with a living faith; "being" then "justified "by faith, they had peace with God:" "their sins "were cast into the depths of the sea," "never more "to be mentioned against them."‡ Their repentance having been evidenced by newness of life; their faith having worked by love to Christ, his cause, and his people; and the Spirit of adoption having sealed them by his sanctifying influences; a new character was formed in them, and their subsequent good works will evince their union with Christ, show their title to the eternal inheritance, and constitute the measure by

* Tit. ii. 13. † Rev. i. 7. Jude 14, 15.
‡ Ezek. xviii. 22. Micah vii. 19.

which their gracious recompence shall be ascertained. For, all their former sins having been blotted out; and all the defects, defilements, and failures of their subsequent obedience repented of, and washed away through the daily exercise of faith in Christ, nothing will be found written concerning them, but the account of the good works which they did from evangelical principles, and by the grace of the Holy Spirit; whether they have been spared to produce these good fruits, for a longer or a shorter time. Then all their conscientious self-denial, their secret piety and charity, their heavenly meditations and affections, their pure disinterested motives; their edifying converse; their zeal, gratitude, self-abasement, godly sorrow, patience, meekness, perseverance in doing good against evil, constancy in the midst of opposition; with all they have renounced, ventured, laboured, or suffered for Christ's sake, will be brought to *light and* made manifest before men and Angels. Every calumny and malicious charge of hypocrisy, affectation, or spiritual pride, will be refuted; their whole conduct will appear in its true light, and it will be undeniably manifest, that they were the upright worshippers and servants of God, the disciples and friends of Christ, and decidedly on his part in this evil world. Then it will be seen, that it "is a righteous thing with God "to recompence" with his heavenly rest, those, who willingly endured tribulations for his sake; whilst they lived among his enemies;* and no one shall be able to object to the decision of the Judge, when he shall

* 2 Thess. i. 4—12.

say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the "kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of "the world."

On the other hand, many who call Christ Lord, Lord, will be exposed as hypocrites, and workers of iniquity;* for it will then be proved that their profession or preaching of the gospel, attendance on ordinances and outward services, sprang from corrupt and selfish motives; that their transient convictions and affections never issued in an inward change; that they secretly "loved the wages of unrighteousness," or the pleasures of sin; that they were the slaves of avarice, ambition, sensuality, or malignant passions; that they did all their works to be seen of men, and were strangers to constant, fervent, secret religion; that they did not love Christ and his cause, but were deceived by a dead faith, a presumptuous hope, and a false repentance; and that they were not interested in the new covenant, but remained under the curse of the law, with the aggravation of having also abused and disgraced the gospel. This will be the case, not only with those who have secretly committed gross immoralities, and cloaked them with a religious profession; but with all who have not shown their love to Christ, by a disposition to love and do good to his people for his sake, and whatever they may now urge in excuse for their conduct, they will be silenced at last, and with all other unbelievers be doomed, "to "depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for "the devil and his angels."

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* Matt. vii. 22, 23. xxv. 1—11. Luke xiii. 25—28.

The several scriptural representations of this decisive event concur in establishing these conclusions. "They who sin without law, shall perish without "law;" they that transgress the law, (having had the benefit of revelation,) will be judged and condemned according to it; but if they claim the benefit of the gospel, their professed faith in Christ will be tried by its fruits and effects; so that none will eventually stand in judgment, except the true believer, who hath shown his faith by his works. Yet the doom of benighted heathens, however vile their conduct hath been, will be far less dreadful than that of wicked Christians; and hypocritical professors of the gospel will not only be more severely punished than the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, but it will even be more tolerable for Sodom than for them.

Let it be here *carefully* observed, that very dangerous conclusions have been drawn from *our Lord's* words respecting the day of judgment:* as if humane and beneficent actions *of any kind* would ensure a man's acceptance at that solemn season. But every reflecting person on deliberately examining the passage must perceive, that nothing will then be favourably noticed, which has been done by impenitent despisers of the gospel, from ostentation, or pharisaical pride, or a mere instinctive propensity; for this supposition contradicts and disannuls the whole system of Christianity.—In fact, *kindness to believers, the brethren of Christ*, from love to his name, truth, cause, and

* Matt. xxv. 35—40.

image, as the genuine effect of living faith, is *exclusively* mentioned in this description. No doubt, however, but love to our fellow-sinners and enemies, from evangelical motives, will be graciously accepted: but active, liberal love to true Christians, whom we are *naturally* disposed to scorn and hate, is selected, as the most unequivocal proof of our love to Christ; nor can this ever be separated from other instances of humble obedience, in the habitual tenour of our conduct.

It may easily be conceived what discoveries will be made, "when the books shall be opened," in respect of the different descriptions of unbelievers; which will suffice to "stop every mouth," to bring in "the "whole world as guilty before God;" and to illustrate the divine justice in the condemnation of all those, who shall then "go away into everlasting punish-"ment." Every one, who seriously reflects on his own conduct, during the entire course of his past life; and compares his thoughts, words, and works, with the holy commandments of God, will gradually more and more find his own heart condemn him: and if this be the case with the most moral of the human race, where will the blasphemous, the profligate, the fraudulent, the oppressor, and the murderer appear? Whatever may now be objected, or whatever excused, the discovery of the divine glory of the holy and perfect law, of man's obligations, and of the whole behaviour of every individual, towards God and man, will then leave the most specious unbelievers speechless, and make them feel the justice of their own condemnation.

But what words can express the consequence of this definitive sentence? Or who does not see that the language of Scripture is selected to mark out the most tremendous effects of almighty indignation? "These shall go away into *everlasting*," (or *eternal*,) "*punishment*." But how can this be, if the persons thus condemned do not exist for ever in a state of punishment? Or what proof have we of the *eternity* of happiness intended for the righteous, if the same word in the same verse in one place do not mean *eternal*? ——We need not enlarge.——If the ideas "of a "never dying worm, an inextinguishable fire," "the "blackness of darkness for ever," and "the compa- "ny of the devil and his angels," do not "warn "men to flee from the wrath to come," none else can, for these only fail, "because they are not be- "lieved."

On the other hand, "a kingdom that *cannot* be "moved," an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading "inheritance," "an exceeding and eternal weight of "glory," "pleasures at God's right hand for ever- "more," are expressions so energetick, that did we truly believe and attend to them, we could not but be influenced by them in all our conduct. Here then we pause—"Beloved, we know not what we shall be; "but this we know, that when Jesus shall appear, we "shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is;" and the countless ages of eternity will only serve to enhance our unutterable joys. With what words, then, can we more properly close this Essay, and the present compendious publication, than those of the

Apostle? "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look "for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found "of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

THE END.

INDEX.

A

Absurdities, preferred by some to scriptural truth, 130—133. 219. 242, 243.
Adam, the first and second contrasted, 162, 163.
Advocate, Christ our with the Father, 173, 174. 196, 197. 200—202. 206.
Access, of sinners to God, difficulties respecting it, 162—168. 199. 454—455; only through Christ, 169—174. 201—205. 455, 456.
Adoption, the Believer's privilege, 341; its unspeakable value, 342; "Spirit of," 294. 342—345. 366.
Affections, those required towards Christ prove his Deity, 148—152. 365, 366; towards God, 68—74. 392, 393. 364—366; the principal requirement of Revelation, 368; towards our neighbours, 79—93. 377—393; Relatives, 79—81. 396—429; Christian Brethren, 379, 380; Enemies, 385—388; Heavenly things, and things "on Earth," 366, 367. 374—377.
Afflictions, the Believer's view of them, 361—363.
Agreement, among the sacred writers, 6—9.
Alienation from God, the source of all other sins, 321—323.
Allegories, the language of them inadmissible in laws and grants, 261—264.
Angel of the Covenant, title of Christ, 116. 124.
Angels Holy, the Servants of Christ, 125. 206; worship him, 129, 130. 255; Ministers to his people, 346; will attend him when he shall come to judgment, 491.
Antinomianism, abominable, 194; absurdities which it involves, 293, 299; whence it springs, 307. 310—312; often found in connection with Pharisaical pride, 307; refined species of it, 224—228.
Antitrinitarians, attempt to alter the form of Baptism, 271, 272. See *Socinians*.
Apocryphal books, 11.
Arianism, a system repugnant to reason, 111.
Armour of God, how taken and used, 331, 332.
Ascension of Christ, ends answered by it, 196, &c.
Assurance of hope, or of Salvation, distinct from faith, 337—339; not enjoyed by all believers, 338, 339; how prevented, or obtained, 339; 369.
Atonement of Christ, why necessary, 162—165. 168. 303, 304; doctrine of discussed, 175, &c. importance of the doctrine, 193—195. 366; the effect, not the cause of the Father's mercy, 202. 303; especially commemorated in the Lord's Supper, 480, &c. day of, under the law, 173.
Attributes, divine, ascribed to Christ, 115—119. 122, 123; and to Holy Spirit, 265, 266.
Authority, a valuable talent, how to be improved, 434—439.

B

Baptism, the scriptural form of words for it implies the Deity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, and the doctrine of the Trinity, 128. 145. 271, 272; not Regeneration. 241. 242; what it represents, 470, 471; to whom administered by the Apostles, and in the primitive times, 471, 472; what profession it implies, 472; of infants, 470, 471; its meaning and good effects, 473, 474; the duty of parents consequent on it, 473—479.
Believers, their warfare and experience, 318, &c. their privileges, 334, &c. their character, &c. 353, &c.
Benevolence, excited by evangelical principles, 377, &c.
Bigotry, love to truth falsely so called, 31. 47. 142; how the charge should be obviated, 278.
Bigots, prone to calumny, 90.
Boasting, how excluded, 232. 238.
Books, mischief done by bad ones, 85. 441; dispersing good ones, 441. 445; the advantage of good ones written by distinguished laymen, 441; those opened at the day of judgment, 488—491.
"*Born again*." See *Regeneration*.

C

Calamities, publick, how viewed by the believer, 347.
Candour, false, 47; true, 226. 3 3.
Carnal mind, enmity against God and his law, 307.
Character, of such as have received the scriptures, contrasted with that of such as have rejected them, 9. 10; of mankind agree with that drawn in scripture, 19. 20; of Gentile scriptural, 46, &c. carefully to be distinguished from that of Idols, 47—51. most glorious and lovely, 208; of Christ absolutely perfect, 23. 24; of Christians, 251, &c.
Charity, perfectly consistent with considering men's state as dangerous, 132, 133. 142.
Charms, unlawful, 69.
Children, duties of, to Parents, 80, 81. 406—412; should be corrected while young, 413. 414; should not preach to their parents, 411, 412.
Christ, evidence of his Resurrection, 14—16. his deity, proofs of, 111, &c. importance of that doctrine, 136, &c. his fitness for the

office of Mediator, 165—170; the atonement of his death, 175, &c. his exaltation, 195, &c. his high priest-hood, 198—201; his intercession, 202—205; his mediatorial kingdom, 156. 206—210; his Prophetical office, 210—213; cannot be received in one office and rejected in another, 212, 213; the righteousness of believers by *imputation*, 226, 227; their joy, 151, 152; their life and strength, 134. 329, 330. 350, 351; his love, 168—170. 201, 202. 326, 327. 480, precious to believers, 290, 291: their love towards him, 145—149. 248 249. 365, 366; his coming to judgment, 191, &c.

Christian, life of, 317, &c. see *believers, and warfare.*

Church, distinction between militant and triumphant, 316.

Circumcision, 283: door of admission into the ancient church, 471.

Communion, with God, the believer's privilege, 347—349.

Comfort, christian, its nature, 319, &c.

Contentment, required by the moral law, 88—93; tendency of evangelical principles to promote it, 362, 363. 371—377.

Conversion, from one sect or opinion to another, not *regeneration*, 243, 244; the change intended by, 245, 246. 288, 289.

Conviction, of sin, arises from scriptural views of the moral law, 79. 93. 300—303.

Correction, of children, generally necessary 413; directions concerning, 414, 415.

Covetousness, idolatry of it, 79. 442; contrary to the spiritual law of God, 87, 88, 90—92; counteracted by evangelical principles, 371—377. 442, 443.

Courteousness, 392, 393. 428.

Cross, of Christ, lessons inculcated by it, 193, 194. 372, 373; victories obtained by him on it, 196. 197.

Crucifixion, to the world, 372, 373, 376.

D

Darkness, kingdom of, 324—327.

Death, its different aspects on the righteous and the wicked, 104, 105; the friend of believers, 351; immediately followed by a state of happiness or misery, 187—191.

Declension of vital religion, greatly owing to the neglect of the scriptural doctrine concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, 286. 287. 290, 291.

Deity, of Christ, stated, 111; proofs of, 112, &c. 280; the doctrine essential to christianity, 136, &c. objections considered, 155—157.

Depravity, of human nature, 97—100. 321—324; not from education, 99.

Devotedness, required to Christ, a proof of his Deity, 149, 150.

Dishonesty, various instances of, 87, 88. 423.

Dissatisfaction, with a low condition in the world, inconsistent with evangelical principles, 373—376.

Distinctions, outward, comparatively vain, 107. 343; appear so to the believer when meditating on the Cross of Christ, or on the eternal world, 371—375; not however abolished by christianity, 374, 375. 422.

Divorces, when lawful, 85. 399. 400.

Doubts, of being in a state of acceptance, sometimes effects and evidences of faith, 338, 339.

Dwelling, 82. 390.

Duties, relative, 394—398; of husbands and wives, 398—406; of parents and children, 409—419; of brothers and sisters, and other near relations, 419, 420; of masters and servants, 421—428, of subjects, 428; of men of genius, learning or celebrity, 439—442; of ministers of religion, 442—444; of the rich 444—446; duties and privileges generally coincident, 394.

E

Earthly things, contrasted with *heavenly things*, 240.

Education, directions concerning, 412—418.

Enemies, with which the christian must conflict, 321, &c, conduct towards, enjoined by christianity, 387—390; those of christians, enemies of God also, 240. 390.

Enmity to God, overcome only by regeneration, 253—255.

Enthusiasm, 25. 29. 242. 277, 278. 284. 291, 292. 295.

Eternity, vast importance of, 107, 108; of future punishment, 101, 102. 502.

Evangelical principles, their value and tendency, 353, &c.

Evil, manifestly abounds, 96. 98; no other account of its origin so satisfactory as that of the Bible, 97.

Example of Christ, that of perfect obedience to the divine law, 306.

Experience, of the christian, 316, &c.

F

Faculties, no new ones communicated in regeneration, 214.

Faith, requisite in searching the scriptures, 32, 33. 43, that required to be placed in Christ, implies his Deity, 145—147; *living*, the effect of regeneration, 221. 289, 290. 318, 319; importance given to it in scripture, 222, 223; nature and effects of it, 224. 226—229; does not *include* repentance, love, &c. though inseparably connected with them, 225, 226. 228, 229; not mere assent, 226; in Christ, 229, 230; what sense it justifies, 231—233; distinct from assurance of salvation, 337—339; the christian's *shield*, 330; objections to the doctrine of justification by Faith alone answered, 235; importance of the doctrine, 235; *dead* faith, 39. 225, 235, 236.

Family-religion, 40. 402—407. 415. 422. 427—428.

Fanciful, interpretations of scripture, 43, 44.

Fear, of God, &c, 61. 74—76; essential to true religion, 364, 365.

Flesh, and the *Land*, 115.

Flesh, meaning of the word when opposed to the spirit in scripture, 320, 240. 221.

Folly, of mankind, as to eternal things, 109, 110.

Forbearance, mutual, necessary to conjugal or domestick harmony, 404. 419. 426.

Forgiveness, of sins, distinct from justification, 216, 217; every believer's privilege, 335—337; of injuries, a duty, 34. 385. 392.

Fortune-telling, unlawful, 69.

Friend, of God, every believer is so, 340—341.

Frugality, a duty, 88. 333, 384.

Fruit, of the Spirit, 294.

Future state, the expectation of one, congenial to the human mind, 100; certainly known by revelation alone, 487, 488; its nature, 502. 503.

G

Gaming, evil of, 91—94.

Genius, how improveable, 439—441.

Gifts; see *Spirit, Holy.*

God, proper views of his nature, and character obtained only from revelation, 1. 19. 36. 51, 52; importance of those views, 45—51.

Sin, erroneous sentiments concerning, 51, 52; scriptural delineation of his natural, and moral perfections, 54—63; the only adequate felicity of a rational soul 65. 351; known only in and by Christ, 62. 118—120. 139, 140; *manifest in the flesh*, the great mystery of godliness, 113. 131. 155; see *Godhead*, *Justice*, *Love*, *Mercy*, *Name of God*.

Godliness, the chief end of revelation, 368; cannot subsist without morality, 368.

Goodness, of God, 57—59.

Gospel, as distinguished from the Law, 297, &c. the whole plan of it encourages prayer, 455. 56.

Government, of God, 56. 64, &c. 303, 304.

Grace, opposed to works, 221; how sinners are justified by, 231—233; the source of salvation, 241. 242. 295, 297; see *Mercy*, *Spirit, Holy*.

H

Habits, children to be kept from bad and and formed to good, 423.

Happiness, unchangeable in its nature, 253. 254; that of pardoned sinners, 335.

Harmony, of the sacred writers, 10, 11; of the divine perfections displayed in Christ, 62; in his atonement [illegible] 184—187, 187, 18[illegible] in his mediation, 164, 165. 200—202. 458, 459.

Heart, state of, especially regarded in the moral law, 65. 301; of fallen man contrary to that law, 79. 254; 255. 347; *new heart*, what is meant by, 251. 252; how produced, 254, 255. 287—291. 351; how manifested, 352, &c.

Heaven, its felicity not suited to the unregenerate, 255; greatly consists in the presence and love of Christ, 152, 153; altogether *holy*, 307. 502.

Hebrews, Epistle to, its grand subject, 172, 173. 179. 200.

Hell, frequent meaning of the word, 489.

Helpmeet, meaning of the term, 398.

Heretics, 140, 141; their general character, 287, 288; christians hated and persecuted under that name, 490.

Holiness, of the divine character, 54—63; of the moral law, 93. 220. 300—303; our's for substance, conformity to the divine character and law, 304—307. 319; the love of, produced in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, 288—290; enforced by motives taken from the Cross of Christ, 193, 194.

Hope, produced by the Holy Spirit, 293; the christian's *helmet*, 381.

Humility, how produced and maintained, 300—302. 308, 309. 352—357.

Hypocrisy, 25. 73. 307. 422.

I

I am, the title claimed by Christ, 115.

Idolatry, evil, origin, and effects of, 47—51; the principal violation of the divine law, 69, 70. 74; various refined species of it, 51—53. 62. 69, 70. 325; either Trinitarians or Anti-trinitarians, are guilty of it, 128, 129, 135, 136, 137. 147. 149. 152. 274.

Images, use of, in religious worship, 71—73.

Imagination, peculiarly accessible to evil spirits, 328, 327.

Immortality, see *Future state*.

Impressions, not regeneration, 243, 244.

Importance, of revealed truth, 24, &c.

Imputed, righteousness, 217—219. 228, 229.

Incarnation, of Christ, reasons of, 170—173.

Indifference, to revealed truth, its prevalence and pernicious effects, 20—33. 137. 138; [illegible] religion, 333; to worldly things the [illegible] of evangelical principles, 370—377.

Indolence, keeps many from improving their talents, 440.

Infants, baptism of, what it implies and how to be improved, 473—476.

Infinity, beyond our grasp, 289.

Influence, may be increased, 433; improvable as a talent, 433.

Influences, see *Spirit Holy*.

Incomprehensible, all the works of God are, 150. 268.

Injuries, a patient and forgiving temper under them, the effect of evangelical principles, 385—393.

Intercession, of Christ, 200—206; essentially differs from the prayers of one man for others, 204, 205.

Inspiration, of the Scriptures, how to be understood, 7, 8; proofs of, 9—27. 160.

Intermediate, state, 489—494.

J

James, the Apostle, his doctrine concerning faith and works, 221, 222.

Jehovah our Righteousness, 227.

Jesus, see *Christ*.

John, (Baptist) his testimony to Christ, 123. 126; in what sense "filled with the Holy "Ghost," 284.

Joy, in Christ, a proof of his Deity, 151, 152; the christian's, 250—254; distinguished from that of hypocrites, 349, 350.

Judgment, description of, a proof of Christ's Deity, 125, 126. 153; all committed to Christ, 154. 207—209; love to him, the grand distinguishing criterion of it, 148, 149, 207; how according to men's works, 56. 208. 429—430; the difficulties, discoveries and consequences of this final decision, 492—502; the Spirit's office to convince of *judgment*, 289.

Justice, remunerative, an essential perfection of Jehovah's character and government, 56—59. 61. 165. 182—185. 223; see *Harmony of God in the condemnation of the wicked*, 163, 164. 501; perfect, required of men by the divine law, 87, 88; conscientious regard to it produced by evangelical principles, 386—384.

Justification, meaning of the term, 216—217. 218; implies far more than pardon, 217—219; by faith alone, 220—234; how to be obtained? A most important question, 235—237; the privilege of every believer, 225—228. 335—337.

K

King of Kings, title of Christ, 207.

Kingdom, of Christ, over all creatures for the benefit of his Church, 124. 128. 205. 207; distinguished from the absolute dominion of God as Creator, 156. 209; of God, what meant by *seeking it first*, 108.

Kings, duties of, 434—436.

Knowledge, of God from revelation, 5. 19. 35; in and by Christ, 62. 119—121. 140, 141; by the Spirit, 293.

L

Lamb, Christ worshipped by Angels under this Title, 130; of God, why Christ is so called, 190. 202.

Law, moral, its precepts distinguished from positive institutions, 64; its spirituality, 65—67; a brief exposition of it, 68, &c. cannot justify a sinner, 93, 96. 220—223. 49—[illegible] Curse of, what meant by, 95; the moral, [illegible] in the works [illegible] by the works of the [illegible] all to be [illegible] justification, 220, 221. [illegible] available, 298, 299. its use in ministe-

visory to the gospel, 227, &c. "dead to the "law," what meant by, 300, 301; rule of conduct to believers, 304—306; written in their hearts, and delighted in by them, 306—308. 323, 324. 368; hated by all unregenerate men, 307; bad effects of the want of a clear knowledge of its nature and uses, 310, &c. comparison of his heart and life with it teaches the christian humility 308 313. 354; *Ceremonial*, evidently typical of Christ and his mediation, 172, 173. 176—180; *Municipal*, christianity contains none, 311; *mitigated*, or *new and milder*, groundless notions concerning, 234, 235. 299.

Liberality, duty of, 384, 385. 444—447.

Life, short, uncertain, and troublesome. 97—99. 105; its grand business, 106—109; *spiritual*, distinct from animal, and from rationality, 250; see *Christ, Spirit, Holy*.

Light, Christ, how that of the world, 211.

Luck, Mr. quotation from, 238.

Lord's-day, how to be observed, 76—79, 427.

Lord's Supper, a proof of the doctrine of the atonement, 191, 192. its institution, 476, &c. absurdity of literally interpreting Christ's words, 477, profession implied by receiving it, 479—480; preparation for it. 481—483; the guilt and danger of being unfit to receive it, 481; receiving, the duty of all christians, 483, 484.

Lotteries, evil of, 91, 92.

Love, the requirement of the law, 66, 67; the Apostle's definition of, 393; of God to us, 57. 58. 61, 62; shewn in providing a Mediator, 163—168. 168; in giving his Son a sacrifice for our sins, 184, 185. 202; see *Grace, Mercy*; of Christ to us, 166—170. 192, 193. 201, 202. 207. 219; 220. 250; especially remembered in the Lord's Supper, 479—481; to God, what it implies, 66, 67. 70. 365, 366; that required for Christ, implies his Deity, 147—149. 364; springs from regeneration, 248, 249. 365; excited in the heart by the Holy Spirit, 290, 291; constrains to obedience, 66. 75. 97. 408; of mankind, 79—93; influenced by evangelical principles, 77—379; of the brethren, a peculiar evidence of conversion, 373— 80; distinguished from attachment to a sect, 85; particularly noticed at the day of judgment. 500; to the wicked consistent with a decided protest against their principles, and hatred of their sins, 387—390, see *Affections*.

Lying, 89, 90; renounced by such as are influenced by evangelical principles, 382, 383.

M

Magistrates, their duties, 474—479.

Man, his situation in this present world, 94, &c. new and old contrasted, 220.

Marriage, instituted by the Creator, 85. 398, 399; by what dissolved, 399, 400; some form of solemnization necessary, 400, 401; how it should be entered into, 402; duties of parents to their children respecting it, 417.

Masters, their duties, 426—435.

Mediator, doctrine of, grand peculiarity of revelation, 111; office and qualifications of one, 152—162; need of one, between God and man, 162—165; Christ alone capable of sustaining that office, 166—170; no one self-appointed could sustain it, 168; Christ's way of performing it, 170—173; Christ the only Mediator in behalf of mankind, 174; his office naturally divided into two parts, 197; shews the doctrine of his Deity essential to christianity, 135—145; only encouraging to those who pray, 204, 205.

Mediatorial Kingdom, distinct from that of the *Creator*, 157. 209; the nature of it, 209, 210.

Meekness, a christian temper, 385—392.

Mercy, of God, 58—63; in harmony with his other perfections, 200—202. 307; see *Love*; a christian temper, 384, 388.

Mercy-seat, 172—174. 202. 254, 457. 459.

Melchizedek, a type of Christ, 198. 200.

Messiah, whence the name is derived, 213. 279.

Ministers of Religion, their duties, 442—444.

Miracles, prove the divine inspiration of Scripture. 12—17; those of Christ ascribed to the Holy Spirit, 280; have ceased, the design being answered. 232, 283.

Moses, his writings appealed to as divinely inspired by Christ and his Apostles, 179, 180.

Murder, different species of, 81—84.

Mystery, of godliness, 111. 114—131. 155.

Mysteries, no objection to revelation, 21. 155, 156. 269, 270; no contradiction, 270.

N

Name, of God, 62. 74, 75;—271, 272; how taken in vain, 74, 75. 132.

Natural Religion, an ambigious expression, 28.

New creature, meaning of, 244.

O

Oaths, false, most atrocious; often the consequence of being needlessly multiplied and irreverently administered, 74, 75.

Obduracy, judicial, 106.

Obedience, believers bound to, by most endearing obligations, 210, 211. 304—307; disposed to it by evangelical principles, 357, 358. 394—398, impossible that any rational creature should be freed from obligations to, 298, 299; *sincere*, and ambiguous and abused term, 224, 225.

Objections, to the doctrine of Christ's Deity considered, 135—157; to that of the atonement, 187, 188; to that of justification by faith, 233—235; to that of the Trinity, 267—270.

Oracles, of God, 180; *of reason*, originally from revelation, as far as true in matters of religion, 29.

P

Pardon, see *Forgiveness*.

Parents, duties of, 412—418.

Partiality, of parents, of bad consequence, 419.

Patience, of God, 61; a motive to patience towards each other, 385—387, under sufferings, 390— 0.

Peace, Christ our, 173. 340; the King of, 206; with God, the believer's privilege, 339—341; a christian temper, 385. 390—393.

Penteost, day of, 280, 281. 284. 290.

Perjury, 75.

Persecutors, to be loved, 387—390.

Perseverance, of believers, 350—352.

Person, meaning of the term as applied to the Deity, 259—261.

Philanthropy, of those who are censured as uncharitable, 1 0; promoted by evangelical principles, 276, 377—380.

Philosopher's Deity, 53.

Polygamy, contrary to the original ordinance of God, and the spirit of christianity, 85. 399—401.

Poor, believers assured of temporal provision 345—347; evangelical principles teach contentment to the, 361—363. 370—377; duties of, to the rich, 428.

53; Erroneous sentiments concerning, 51, 52; scriptural delineation of his natural, and moral perfections, 54—63; the only adequate felicity of a rational soul 68. 351; known only in and by Christ, 62. 118—120. 139, 140; *manifest in the flesh*, the great mystery of godliness, 113. 131. 155; see *Goodness, Justice, Love, Mercy, Name of God.*

Godliness, the chief end of revelation, 368; cannot subsist without morality, 368.

Goodness, of God, 57—59.

Gospel, as distinguished from the Law, 297, &c. the whole plan of it encourages prayer, 455. 456.

Government, of God, 56. 64, &c. 303, 304.

Grace, opposed to works, 221; how sinners are justified by, 231—233; the source of salvation, 234. 242. 296, 297; see *Mercy, Spirit, Holy.*

H

Habits, children to be kept from bad and and formed to good, 413.

Happiness, unchangeable in its nature, 253, 254; that of pardoned sinners, 335.

Harmony, of the sacred writers, 10, 11; of the divine perfections displayed in Christ, 62; in his atonement 56. 59. 182—186. 187, 188; in his mediation, 164, 165. 200—202. 458, 459.

Heart, state of, especially regarded in the moral law, 65. 301; of fallen man contrary to that law, 79. 254; 255. 307; *new heart*, what is meant by, 251, 252; how produced, 254, 255. 287—291. 351; how manifested, 352, &c.

Heaven, its felicity not suited to the unregenerate, 255; greatly consists in the presence and love of Christ, 152, 153; altogether *holy*, 307. 502.

Hebrews, Epistle to, its grand subject, 172, 173. 179. 200.

Hell, frequent meaning of the word, 489.

Help-meet, meaning of the term, 398.

Heretics, 140, 141; their general character, 287, 288; christians hated and persecuted under that name, 490.

Holiness, of the divine character, 54—63; of the moral law, 93. 220. 300—303; our's for substance, conformity to the divine character and law, 304—307. 319; the love of, produced in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, 288—290; enforced by motives taken from the Cross of Christ, 193, 194.

Hope, produced by the Holy Spirit, 293; the the christian's *helmet*, 381.

Humility, how produced and maintained, 300—302. 308, 309. 352—357.

Hypocrisy, 25. 73. 307. 422.

I

I am, the title claimed by Christ, 115.

Idolatry, evil, origin, and effects of, 47—51; the principal violation of the divine law, 69, 70. 74; various refined species of it, 51—55. 62. 69, 70. 323; either Trinitarians or Anti-trinitarians, are guilty of it, 128, 129, 135, 136, 137. 147. 144. 152. 274.

Images, use of, in religious worship, 71—73.

Imagination, peculiarly accessible to evil spirits, 328, 327.

Immortality, see *Future state.*

Impressions, not regeneration, 243, 244.

Importance, of revealed truth, 28, &c.

Imputed, righteousness, 217—219. 228, 229.

Incarnation, of Christ, reasons of, 170—173.

Indifference, to revealed truth, its prevalence and pernicious effects, 29—33. 137. 138; about religion, 333; to worldly things the effect of evangelical principles, 370—377.

Indolence, keeps many from improving their talents, 440.

Infants, baptism of, what it implies and how to be improved, 473—476.

Infinity, beyond our grasp, 259.

Influence, may be increased, 433; improvable as a talent, 433.

Influences, see *Spirit Holy.*

Incomprehensible, all the works of God are so, 156. 268.

Injuries, a patient and forgiving temper under them, the effect of evangelical principles, 385—393.

Intercession, of Christ, 200—206; essentially differs from the prayers of one man for others, 204, 205.

Inspiration, of the Scriptures, how to be understood, 7, 8; proofs of, 9—27. 180.

Intermediate, state, 489—494.

J

James, the Apostle, his doctrine concerning faith and works, 221, 222.

Jehovah our Righteousness, 227.

Jesus, see *Christ.*

John, (Baptist) his testimony to Christ, 127. 190; in what sense "filled with the Holy "Ghost," 284.

Joy, in Christ, a proof of his Deity, 151, 152; the christian's, 250—254; distinguished from that of hypocrites, 349, 350.

Judgment, description of, a proof of Christ's Deity, 125, 126. 134; all committed to Christ, 134. 207—209; love to him, the grand distinguishing criterion of it, 148, 500, 501; how according to men's works, 56. 335. 496—499; the solemnities, discoveries, and consequences of this final decision, 498—502; the Spirit's office to convince of *judgment*, 289.

Justice, remunerative, an essential perfection of Jehovah's character and *government*; 56—59. 61. 165. 182—185. 228; see *Harmony* of God in the condemnation of the wicked, 103, 104. 501; perfect, required of men by the divine law, 87, 88; conscientious regard to it produced by evangelical principles, 380—384.

Justification, meaning of the term, 216—217. 218; implies far more than pardon, 217—219; by faith alone, 220—234; how to be obtained? A most important question, 235—237; the privilege of every believer, 225—228. 335—337.

K

King of Kings, title of Christ, 207.

Kingdom, of Christ, over all creatures for the benefit of his Church, 124. 125. 206. 209; distinguished from the absolute dominion of God as Creator, 156. 206; of God, what meant by *seeking it first*, 108.

Kings, duties of, 434—435.

Knowledge, of God from revelation, 5. 12. 38, in and by Christ, 62. 119—121. 140; 141; by the Spirit, 293.

L

Lamb, Christ worshipped by Angels under this Title, 139; of God, why Christ is so called, 190 262.

Law, moral, its precepts distinguishable from positive institutions, 64; its spirituality, 65—67; a brief exposition of it, 68, &c. cannot justify a sinner, 93, 96. 232—233. 235—; *Curse* of, what meant by, 98; the curse intended in the words, "by the works of the "law shall no flesh be justified," 232, 233. 220; immutable, 298, 299 its uses in sanc-

visory to the gospel, 327, &c. "dead to the "law," what meant by, 300, 301; rule of conduct to believers, 304—306; written in their hearts, and delighted in by them, 306—308. 333, 334. 358; hated by all unregenerate men, 307; bad effects of the want of a clear knowledge of its nature and uses, 310, &c. comparison of his heart and life with it teaches the christian humility 308 313. 354; *Ceremonial*, evidently typical of Christ and his mediation, 172, 173. 176—180; *Municipal*, christianity contains none, 311; *mitigated*, or *new and milder*, groundless notions concerning, 234, 235. 299.

Liberality, duty of, 384, 385. 444—447.

Life, short, uncertain, and troublesome. 97—99. 105; its grand business, 106—109; *spiritual*, distinct from animal, and from rationality, 250; see *Christ, Spirit, Holy*.

Light, Christ, how that of the world, 211.

Lock, Mr. quotation from, 228.

Lord's-day, how to be observed, 76—79, 427.

Lord's Supper, a proof of the doctrine of the atonement, 191, 192. its institution, 476, &c. absurdity of literally interpreting Christ's words, 477, profession implied by receiving it, 479—480; preparation for it, 481—483; the guilt and danger of being unfit to receive it, 481; receiving, the duty of all christians, 483, 484.

Lotteries, evil of, 91, 92.

Love, the requirement of the law, 60, 67; the Apostle's definition of, 393; of God to us, 57, 58. 61, 62; shewn in providing a Mediator, 163—165. 168; in giving his Son a sacrifice for our sins, 184, 185. 202; see *Grace, Mercy*; of Christ to us, 166—170. 192, 193. 201, 202. 207. 219, 220. 250; especially remembered in the Lord's Supper. 479—481; to God, what it implies, 66, 67. 70. 365, 366; that required for Christ, implies his Deity, 147—149. 364; springs from regeneration, 248, 249. 364; excited in the heart by the Holy Spirit, 290, 291; constrains to obedience, 66. 75. 97. 412; of mankind, 79—93; influenced by evangelical principles, 77—79; of the brethren, a peculiar evidence of conversion, 373—380; distinguished from attachment to a sect, 805; particularly noticed at the day of judgment. 500; to the wicked consistent with a decided protest against their principles, and hatred of their sins, 387—90, see *Affections*.

Lying, 89, 90; renounced by such as are influenced by evangelical principles, 382, 383.

M

Magistrates, their duties, 434—439.

Man, his situation in this present world, 94, &c. new and old contrasted, 220.

Marriage, instituted by the Creator, 85. 398. 399; by what dissolved, 99, 400; some form of solemnization necessary, 400, 401; how it should be entered into, 402; duties of parents to their children respecting it, 417.

Masters, their duties, 426—433.

Mediator, doctrine of, grand peculiarity of revelation, 111; office and qualifications of one, 159—162; need of one, between God and man, 162—165; Christ alone capable of sustaining that office, 166—170; no one self-appointed could sustain it, 168; Christ's way of performing it, 170—173; Christ the only Mediator in behalf of mankind, 174; his office naturally divided into two parts, 197; shews the doctrine of his Deity essential to christianity, 138—145; only encouraging to those who pray, 204, 205.

Mediatorial Kingdom, distinct from that of the Creator, 187. 209; the nature of it, 209, 210.

Meekness, a christian temper, 385—392.

Mercy, of God, 58—62; in harmony with his other perfections, 200—202. 30; see *humanity*; a christian temper, 384, 385.

Mercy-seat, 172—174. 202. 254, 487. 459.

Melchizedek, a type of Christ, 198. 206.

Messiah, whence the name is derived, 213. 279.

Ministers of Religion, their duties, 442—444.

Miracles, prove the divine inspiration of Scripture, 12—17; those of Christ ascribed to the Holy Spirit, 280; have ceased, the design being answered, 282, 283.

Moses, his writings appealed to as divinely inspired by Christ and his Apostles, 179, 180.

Murder, different species of, 81—84.

Mystery, of godliness, 111, 114—131. 155.

Mysteries, no objection to revelation, 21. 155, 156. 269, 270; no contradiction, 270.

N

Name, of God, 62. 74, 75;—271, 272; how taken in vain, 74, 75. 132.

Natural Religion, an ambigious expression, 28.

New creature, meaning of, 244.

O

Oaths, false, most atrocious; often the consequence of being needlessly multiplied and irreverently administered, 74, 75.

Obduracy, judicial, 106.

Obedience, believers bound to, by most endearing obligations, 210, 211. 304—307; disposed to it by evangelical principles, 357, 388. 394—398, impossible that any rational creature should be freed from obligations to, 298, 299; *sincere*, and ambiguous and abused term, 224, 225.

Objections, to the doctrine of Christ's Deity considered, 138—157; to that of the atonement, 187, 188; to that of justification by faith, 223—235; to that of the Trinity, 267—270.

Oracles, of God, 180; *of reason*, originally from revelation, as far as true in matters of religion, 29.

P

Pardon, see *Forgiveness*.

Parents, duties of, 412—418.

Partiality, of parents, of bad consequence, 419.

Patience, of God, 61; a motive to patience towards each other, 385—387, under sufferings, 390—393.

Peace, Christ our, 173. 340; the King of, 206; with God, the believer's privilege, 339—341; a christian temper, 385. 390—393.

Pentecost, day of, 280, 281. 284. 290.

Perjury, 75.

Persecutors, to be loved, 387—390.

Perseverance, of believers. 350—352.

Person, meaning of the term as applied to the Deity, 259—261.

Philanthropy, of those who are censured as uncharitable, 1 0; promoted by evangelical principles, 276, 377—380.

Philosopher's Deity, 53.

Polygamy, contrary to the original ordinance of God, and the spirit of christianity, 85. 399—401.

Poor, believers assured of temporal provision 345—347; evangelical principles teach contentment to the, 361—363. 370—377; duties of, to the rich, 428.

Pope, Alex. the tendency of the principles advanced in his Universal Prayer, 17.
Praise, to God, required by the law, 68, 69; an anticipation of heaven, 414.
Prayer, should accompany reading the scriptures, 43; to Christ, evident instances of, 128, 129; its use in our spiritual warfare, 328—332; the believer's privilege, 341, 347—349; for enemies, 342; for relatives and others, 205, 209, 406, 412, 415, 416, 426—428; the duty of, 449—456; what it implies, 449—455; why men are so averse to it, and unable to perform it, 452—454; accepted only through Christ, 201—205, 454—456; encouragement to, 457—459; efficacy of it, 460—464; various ways in which it is answered, 461, 462; the blessings enjoyed by means of it, 462—464; the difficulty of engaging and persisting in it, 464; divided into *public*, *social*, and *secret*, 464, 465; best helps to, 465.
Pride, kept down by comparing our conduct with the law of God, 308, 309; inconsistent with evangelical principles, 352—357.
Priest, high, under the law a type of Christ, 162, 199, 200.
Priestly, office of Christ, 198, 206.
Privileges, of true christians, 334, &c.
Promise, of the Spirit remarkable in the New Testament, 253.
Propensities, natural, often assume the appearance of gracious affections, 394, 395.
Prophecies, already fulfilled, prove the divine inspiration of the scriptures, 17—19, 130, 131.
Prophetick, office of Christ, 210—213.
Providence, kingdom of, administered by Christ, 206—209; reliance on the believer's privilege, 345—347; submission to, the believer's duty, and disposition, 361—363, 370—377.
Punishment, future, of the wicked, eternal, 100—103, 502; justice of this, 104.
Purity, of heart, the object of the divine commandment, 50—87.
Purgatory, doctrine of, contrary to scripture, 103.

Q

Qualifications, requisite in the Mediator, 159, &c.; for the enjoyment of happiness, 283—285.

R

Reason, the religion of, more proper than *natural* religion, 27; some revealed truths consistent with its decisions, 29—31; those religious truths which could not be discovered by it, most important, 31—37; its insufficiency, 8, 9, 31—33; no part of revelation contrary to it, 21, 22, 69, 155—157, 175, 176, 179, 267—270; marks of communication evidently derived, (so far as true) originally from revelation, 29.
Redeemer, his dignity and sufferings, 131—137, &c. *Christ*.
Redemption, the grand display of the divine glory, 61, 109—168, 182—185, 187, 188.
Self-renunciation, not regeneration, 242, 243.
Regeneration, its precedes true faith, 38, 221 doctrine of considered, 238, &c. what meant by it, 241—244; it communicates no new faculties, but a disposition to use all our faculties aright, 244; defined and illustrated as to its nature and effects, 245—252; necessity of it, 252—258; the work of God yet connected with the use of means, 255—257; explained away by numbers, 312.
Relations, inferior, not appointed judges of the superior, 80; see *Duties*.
Repentance, cannot compensate for transgression, 94; connected with saving faith, yet distinct from it, 225—226; the effect of regeneration, 248, 283, 289; *Antinomian*, the result of evangelical principles, 353—357.
Resignation, see *Patience*.
Resurrection, of Christ, evidence of, 14—17; ends answered by it, 197; from the death of sin, 250; general, 491—495; objections to it considered, 493—494; order of, 494, 503.
Revelation, alone can discover to us true religion, 50—53; comparative value of its different parts, 28—33; grand design of, 36.
Reviling, unchristian, 359, 360.
Reward, of righteousness, more than pardon, 186.
Riches, vanity, and danger of, 107, 108, 348, 370—377, 444; a talent capable of improvement, 444—446.
Righteous, none among men, but pardoned sinners, 459.
Righteousness, (see *Justice*) *without works*, what meant by, 217—219; of Christ and of God, 136, 187, 226, 227, 232, 233; imputed, 228; faith accounted for, 231—235; the spirit convincing of, 268, 269; submission to that of God, 350; see *Scripture-righteousness*.
Rome, Church of, succeeded in some claims by modern socinians, 125.
Rulers, see *Duties*.

S

Sabbath, obligations of, 76; how to be observed, 76—79.
Sacrament, meaning of the word, 407; the nature of one, 408, 409; see *Baptism*, and *the Lord's Supper*.
Sacrifice, human, many still offered, 52; expiatory, all originally from revelation, 178; of the Mosaic law, nature of, 179—182; typical of the atonement of Christ, 179—184; why they could not take away sin, 183—184.
Saints, prayer to them idolatry, 71, 72; all in heaven ascribe their salvation to the blood of Christ, 102, 103.
Sanctification, progressive from regeneration, 48; by the agency of the Holy Spirit, 268—295; the genuine effect of evangelical principles, 353, &c.
Satisfaction, of the law, 95, 96.
Separation, 6; progress of it, 144.
Scriptures, proved to be divinely inspired, &c. their tendency, 21—24; their actual effects, 25; duty of a single-hearted examination of them, 26—29; directions for studying them, 30—35; the only account of religious truth, 179, 180; the standard followed by many, 28—30, 130, 131, 268, 269, 285, 287, 309, 407.
Self-love, actions, &c. to be accounted for, 43, 44.
Self-denial, duty of, 125, 322, 323, 402—404, 406, &c.
Self-righteousness, nature and evil of it, 179, criminal cause of it, 223, 224.
Self-will, 87—91; it is children should be early taught to resist it, 434.
Separation, pleading for, 313, 314, 317—320.
Servants, children of God in a state of spiritual bondage by nature, 76; Scriptures addressed to, 77, 78.
Sanctuary, air objects to, 74, 75—77.
Simplicity, of the ordinances of God, 80—87.
Sin, original, 97—99; the transgression of the divine law, 65, 95, 296; imputed to Christ, and taken away by him, 142—144, 228; the evil of it, 101, 139—142; shewn on the Cross of Christ, 148; and by the teachings of the Holy Spirit, 268; the source of all [illegible] opposed by all the graces, 68, 69; [illegible] perfectly destroyed in [illegible]
Sincerity, 31, 309, 407, 458.

Sinners, their situation in this world, 94, &c. danger and folly of their attempts to justify themselves, according to the law, 95, 96. 219, 220. 232. 300. 310, 311.
Slander, 89, 90. 383.
Slave-trade, 82.
Slavery, 420, 421.
Socinians, their interpretation of some parts of Scripture, 130—135; their views of the importance of their sentiments, changed of late, 136, 137; their principles tend to infidelity, 144; some of their arguments considered, 155—157. 179—183. 186—188. 271, 272.
Soul, its immortality, 100, 101; its true value and dignity, 107, 108; how and for what it is lost, 108, 109; it does not sleep from death to the resurrection, 487—491.
Son, of man, how in heaven, when Christ was upon earth, 119.
Speculating men, errors of, 51, 52. 56, 57.
Speech, how to be used and improved, 382. 432. 446.
Spirit, Holy, 106; the meaning of the term, 121, 122; his office to glorify Christ, 144. 151. 261. 290, 291. 349, 350; sent by him as our Prophet. 121, 122. 210, 211; administration of, 258; fruits of, 294; coincident with the requirements of the moral law, 306; doctrine of, discussed, 258, &c. personality of, 253—265; deity of, 265, 266; influences of, *miraculous*, 278—283; have ceased, their end being answered, 282, 283; wicked men have been the subjects of them, 283; *ordinary*, 284—288; the effect of disclaiming them, 285, 286; *convincing*, 288, 289; *sanctifying* and *comforting*, 289—295; effects of neglecting any of them, 285, 286. 290—293. 295. 350; consolations of, the believer's privilege, 349, 350.
Spirits, evil, 325—327.
Spiritual, life, 250.
Spirituality, 33. 293, 294. 366.
Submission, the heart reluctant to it, 81; to God a christian temper, 357—363.
Suicide, 83, 84.
Superstition, 72, 73.
Swearing, 74—76.

T

Talents, parable of, 430, 431; the believer's improvement of them, 432, &c. improvement acquires an increase of them, 432; consciousness of not having duly improved them conduces to humility, 353.
Teachableness, of consistent christians, 354—357.
Temper, christian, 351, &c.
Temple, Christ called his body so, 117.
Temptations, 325.
Terms, needful to use some not found in scripture, 259. 260.
Terror, no proof of regeneration, 243.
Testimony, almost all human affairs conducted by it, 13, 14. 229; of God to the resurrection of Christ, 16, 17; faith the belief of that of God. 7. 31—33. 42. 140—142. 155. 228—231. 269.
Text-books, often misused, 40.
Tillotson, quotation from, 191; his argument against transubstantiation conclusive, 269.
Time, duty of redeeming and improving it, 41, 42. 447.
Tontines, 92.
Tradition, of the church, its weight, as to the inspiration of the scriptures, 9, 10.
Transubstantiation, 269. 476—477.
Trinity, doctrine of, 62. 158, 156. 193. 267—276; its importance in christianity, 274; emblematick representations of it not consistent with the second commandment, 72.
Trust, in God, the believer's privilege and duty, 345, 346. 363; in Christ, 145—147. 230, 231.
Truth, importance of *revealed*, 28, &c. its sanctifying influence, 34. 351. 368, 369; the causes and effects of indifference to it, 30—33. 47—53; in *words*, should be strictly observed, 89, 90. 382, 383.

V

Vows, rash, prohibited, 74; implied in baptism and the Lord's Supper, 356—365. 481—484.

U

Unbelief, why so severely condemned in scripture, 30—34. 138—145.
Ungodly, justifying the, meaning of, 228.
Union, with Christ, 170. 236—238. 231, 232. 290. 308.
Unitarians. 267.
Unregenerate, of what incapable, 252. 255; see *Regeneration*.
Uses, of the moral law, in subserviency to the gospel, 297, &c.

W

Walking, in Christ, 146; with God, 347—349.
War, blood shed in, 81; frequent sources of, 436.
Warfare, christian's, 316, &c. how engaged in, 318; produces an experience to which all others are strangers, 319, 320. 333; this distinguished from the checks of conscience in the unregenerate, 320; with what enemies it is waged, 321—328; encouragements in, 328—330; victory in it, how far attainable, 332, 333.
Water, born of, the meaning of, 239; in baptism, 470, 471.
Wealth, an important talent, how to be improved, 444—446.
Wisdom, of God, in redemption, 59. 167.
Witchcraft, unlawful, 69.
Word, of God, name of Christ, 118. 132, 133. 210.
Works, good, how to be preached, 314, 315.
World, vanity of, comparatively, 107—110. 370—377; the christian's enemy, 235—237; indifference to it, part of the christian temper, 370, &c.
Worship, of Christ, idolatry unless he is God, 126, 127. 135. 147. 151. rendered to Christ on earth, 127—129, in heaven, 130; of saints and angels dishonourable to Christ. 72. 204.

Y

Young, persons, duties of, to the aged, 428.

Z

Zakeus, story of, 185.
Zeal, for the glory of God, 68. 368, 366.

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